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LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

VOL. IX.

Printed by S. Hamilton, Weybridge.

LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ

TO

HER DAUGHTER

AND

HER FRIENDS.

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AN ENLARGED EDITION,

TRANSLATED FROM THE PARIS EDITION OF 1806.

IN NINE VOLUMES.

VOL. IX.

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LETTERS

OF

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, &c.

[The Letters with an asterisk before the number are new Letters.]

LETTER DCCCCLVIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Saturday, for Sunday, Christmas-day.

I WISH you a happy Christmas, and that you may be more just to me next year, than you have been at the close of this. How can you suppose I can guess at M. de la Garde's situation, unless you acquaint me with it? It is only three days ago I learned that he no longer enjoys the pension of 8000 livres; I told you it grieved and surprised me. To-day, you add, that his estate which produced 10,000 livres, now brings him in but 2000; this makes a great difference. How could I conceive any such drawback, when I always saw the chevalier remit him such considerable sums upon the score of his pension? I did not know they were diminished; I thought his estate all together was worth 10,000 livres a year, and, considering the little expense at which he lived, I said he was a rich man, quite at his ease; he might, therefore, very easily have lent my daughter

some money to pay her friend the chevalier de Grignan: this thought was neither unjust nor ridiculous, ignorant as I was, of what had happened to this poor man. This is the medium through which things appeared to me, thinking favourably of your estates in Provence, compared with ours. I must have been folly and injustice itself, to have said what you reproach me with, if I had known what I learn only by your last two letters; they, indeed, have very much changed my opinion; I am now only affected on account of the part I take in such afflicting circumstances, and with deserved admiration at so much courage and resignation to the will of God. You describe to me a true saint, the most Christian-like virtue, which greatly increases the esteem I always entertained for him. Never was there such devotion as his, and if I am fortunate enough to see him some day, it will give me true pleasure; but, once more, how could I guess? You had even represented him so uneasy as to want to sell his estate; in fine, I should have deserved to be scolded more than I can express, if I had written as I did, after knowing what you have just told me. You did not date your letters regularly; you imagined the feathered tribe had been the bearers of your last letters, or you forgot how distant we were from each other. Do me justice, therefore, and believe that I would not so much have wronged M. de la Garde's virtue and situation. I take this opportunity to wish him the compliments of the season, and to assure him of the continuance of my ancient friendship; it is a long time since I said any thing particular to him. I think you happy in being able to afford him consolation in his retreat, as he does to you. I thought he was almost always at La Garde; I can easily suppose his company is agreeable; but when you tell me that you like bad company better than none, and

that you wish your house were full, you are quite unintelligible.

Your account of the chevalier's gout greatly excites my pity. The waters of Balaruc, then, have afforded him no relief? This is melancholy, indeed; I wish him a portion of M. de la Garde's resignation: tell him how much I am grieved at his situation. Inform me of the state of your health; I passed too lightly over the colic which made you keep your bed; is this the colic that is not dangerous, though painful? Coulanges has written the same nonsense to me that he has to you; and I have approved that upon his marrying Paulina, he should restore to your family the fine estate of Avignon, which you have so long possessed; how pleasant it would have been to you for eight or ten years longer! It is said that the pope wishes the king to notify publicly that he disavows the assembly of eighty-two, at which two Grignans assisted, and where infallibility was mentioned; this would be a strange affair. This news does not come from the abbé Bigorré; I long to receive his letters. The hotel de Rochefoucault is half burnt down: the grand apartment, with many goods and papers, are destroyed. Madame de Lavardin is very much grieved at the accident, and she also tells me that madame de la Fayette is seized with such a violent colic and pain in her side, that she is an object of compassion; her health is in a deplorable state. I consider M. de la Trousse to be in a very bad way, let people say what they please.

I salute and embrace M. de Grignan; it is long since I saw him. He could not do less than pay a visit to his *Alcina* in her enchanted castle; I wish she may spend the winter there, that he may have no regret at Aix. We are here alone, with charming books, which afford

us so much pleasure, that I cannot help pitying your want of taste for reading; for I must tell you, my dear child, that you are not fond of reading, and that your son inherits this distaste from you: I tell you this in revenge for what you said to me.

When your son is at Paris and Versailles, he will salute the king, all the ministers, and the whole court. Whatever esteem I entertain for him, I could wish him an uncle only for this first winter; I praise him for his docility; he has written to us very prettily on the pleasure he naturally feels at saying, *my regiment*; in fact, such a station is highly agreeable at eighteen years of age. I pay my compliments to M. de Grignan, as he is the source of the promotion, by sending him to make the first campaign of Philipsburgh. Tell me something of that dear count, whom I have claimed in my letters, and who has abandoned me. Will not your dear son pay you a visit? Let me know when you have sold your company. My son desires to be remembered to you affectionately; he is an admirable and indefatigable reader, never being tired of fine writing, though he has read it over and over again. Your sister-in-law has a *souris* *, which does very well in her black hair; what a whim! but I think it would be a greater one to write any longer; we ought to think of conscience, read M. le Tourneux, and recollect ourselves.

* The name of a fashion.

LETTER DCCCCLIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, September 28, 1689.

We had the finest weather in the world here till Christmas-eve; I was at the end of the long avenue, admiring the beauty of the sun, when, on a sudden, I saw a dark poetical cloud issue from the west, into which the sun plunged himself, and at the same time a thick fog arose, and I flew to the house. I have not been out of my chamber or the chapel till to-day, when the dove has brought the olive-branch; the earth has resumed its colour, the sun has crept again from his cell, and will also send me forth from mine: for you may depend upon it, my dear child, since you are solicitous about my health, that when the weather is bad, I take my seat by the fire-side, reading and chatting with my son and his wife. Have you not observed, as we have, that the days have not been so short as usual? I heard this remark made at Paris, three or four years since. The abbé Têtu mentioned it at the observatory, saying that the day formerly closed at five o'clock, and that now one might still read till that hour. We have experienced this truth here, where there is nothing to distract our attention, so that my son reads every day till five, and it is light till half after: this is a proper subject for a letter which requires no answer. Beaulieu informs me that our marquis is expected; I am impatient to know a thousand particulars respecting him, and to compare the difference between a colonel and our little musketeer.

A thousand reports have been spread concerning

Rome, equally false, according to the different interest and malice of the propagators. The courier is, at length, arrived; and instead of all these prophecies, you find that the pope consents to the abbey of St. Denis being united to St. Cyr without any gratuity, which would amount to 80,000 livres; this is no trifling douceur, and will embarrass those who are still inclined to consider the ambassador as a dupe, and to think cardinal d'Estrées is in the right to question the good dispositions of the pope. The beginning is in our favour, we shall see the end. I sometimes throw the abbé Bigorré's little notes into your packets, who is very well informed of what passes at Rome; I suppose you have no objection to this.

Madame de Coulanges informs me that the new madame de la Fayette was reclined upon a magnificent bed in a noble house; the room hung with beautiful tapestry belonging to the keeper of the seals *; the bed decorated with an ancient mantle of the order, and the room hung with fine tapestry, having the arms ornamented with the staves of the marshal of France, and the collar of the order; looking-glasses, chandeliers, glass plates, and crystals, according to the present fashion, out of number; a great many servants, and valets de chambre in livery; the bride in an elegant dress. In short, such taste reigns in the house of the new-married couple and in their family, that our madame de la Fayette ought to be perfectly satisfied at her son's having formed so great and honourable an alliance. The poor bride was all this while very ill in the colic,

* Michael de Marillac, great-great-grandfather of Mary Magdalen de Marillac, marchioness de la Fayette, was keeper of the seals of France; and Louis de Marillac, brother to the keeper of the seals, was marshal of France.

which made her extremely weak, having been bled twice. At length, Croisilles informs me that the fever has left her, and that her friends begin to breathe again.

I am very impatient, my dear child, for your letter of Friday, that I may hear how you are, and how the chevalier is, whom you have represented in excruciating pain: whatever passes at Grignan is a subject of interest to me. I consider you fortunate in having such good society; you have never yet spent a winter at Grignan: it will be of service to your affairs, you will not feel the fury of the north wind amidst your whole family. I return to the great errors in which you left me with regard to that saint, La Garde. I thought him possessed of an income of 28,000 livres; his estate 10,000, his pension 18,000: I supposed that in such a situation, a little assistance might be given to his intimate friends upon so important an occasion. I was even a little uneasy at his desire of selling his estate; at length the amount of all this is, that his pension is not paid, and his estate is no longer of any value; a greater fall cannot possibly be. I have told you of my repentance for having judged so ill; I love, honour, and admire, the courage and virtue of this holy disciple of Providence. Tell me if many pensions have been retrenched, and if there be no hopes that they will some day be continued. It will be difficult to pass the interval.

The beautiful duchess du Lude has taken all her fine silver furniture to pieces; Beaulieu has seen it; but as the pieces are good, she received 27,000 crowns for them and has furnished her apartments anew, with wooden furniture, mirrors, and glass-plates, which amount to 2000 crowns of this holy poverty. The Rochefoucaults were all the night in the garden during the fire, and the next day the abbé de Marsillac and

his sisters had a dreadful cough and hoarseness; their loss amounts to 20,000 crowns. I have put together a thousand things without connexion; I shall write better on Sunday, for I shall talk of you and all I learn from you; in the mean time, I shall often think of my dear child, and calculate that she loves me.

LETTER DCCCCLX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, January 1, 1690.

I HAVE not yet received the packet of Saturday the 17th, in answer to that of the 7th. I keep an exact account, and it is impossible to cheat me without doing me a great injury, and making me very unhappy; for it is the sequel of a conversation that is interrupted. I hope this letter will come to hand in time, it has often happened so: in the mean while, I have a great deal to say on the tragical and surprising story you tell me of poor Lausier. Your narrative has all the powers of rhetoric; it commands attention, raises curiosity, and leads to an event so melancholy, and so surprising, that I was quite affected at it, and gave a scream which alarmed my son. He came to see what was the matter, read this part of your letter, was affected in the same way, and cried out as I had done, and even louder; for he was well acquainted with this brave worthy man, and we could not help admiring the uncertainty of the hour and the manner of our death. All the circumstances of this event excite peculiar astonishment; the fresh dangers to which he was exposed in the last siege of Mentz, in which he engaged so romantically, his good fortune in escaping, his strength of constitution, the conversation in which he

laughed at the dean's, the rendezvous M. de Noailles had given him, and which he failed to attend by the interposition of the hand of God, which struck him in the street, and rendered aid unavailing, while in the arms of two brothers who loved him, and in the midst of their joy at seeing him again; all this is so affecting, and so remarkable, that though it is not the first sudden death we have heard of, it is attended with more extraordinary circumstances than perhaps ever before occurred, and would claim attention every where; but we have the same reasons that you have to be affected at it, and to fly from every object to this melancholy event. I am going to write to his poor brothers: such losses are very common to them; this is the third brother they have lost.

You have delightful weather through your winter; weather which must necessarily compel the count to go a hunting; must call you away from your patient, and dispose you more to walk than write to me; indeed you are right, such charming days should not be lost. Ours have been so deplorable, that we have not quitted the fire-side, no one being able to venture abroad to witness the fog, notwithstanding the ice and frost; weather, in short, quite the reverse of yours, though my son has not been without six or seven neighbours, who have played, and made a great noise, in this apartment. But the weather improves, and the days begin to lengthen; they are milder sometimes in February and March than in May, by which we were once so much deceived at Livri. M. de Carcassonne has been with you; he had reason to be surprised at hearing that a man with whom he had just breakfasted, and who was in as good health as himself, should drop down dead. Marshal de Villeroi, in a very different case, would not believe

that M. de Genève* was a saint, and canonised, because he had dined twenty times with him at Lyons.

The interest of the eighteenth denier of Languedoc is not excessive; I thought the sixth denier wanted to be explained, it is quite unknown here. The want and scarcity of money is sensibly felt upon a thousand occasions; there are times when purchasers are to be met with immediately for such a commodity as you have to dispose of: now, if these purchasers are to be found, they cannot make good their payments. I hope you will find no such embarrassment: tell me when you have struck the bargain, and whether the marquis is in good winter-quarters. I shall be very curious to know how he acquits himself at Paris and Versailles of all his duties, for he has a great many friends to see. I have desired Beaulieu to tell me all he says and does, and what sort of an appearance he makes.

I comprehend all the unmeaning vague expressions with which you honour the abbess upon her taking leave. How glad I am that she did not take Pauline with her! I often think of this dear amiable girl with affection.

LETTER DCCCCLXI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, January 4, 1690.

Your letter of the 17th has at length found its way to me; it had taken a little trip to Rennes; it fills up the space which made me lose the thread of the conversation. I should also have lost the finest informa-

* St. Francis de Sales.

tion in the world with regard to the *Court of Love*, and my new friend would have been quite distressed at it. His curiosity will be amply gratified; he had received a thousand other accounts, which were good for nothing. This Adhémar must have been a fine fellow, and very much beloved; his mistress must have been dreadfully shocked to see him expire whilst in the act of kissing her hand. I have some doubts, like you, whether she has resolved to take the veil: it is altogether a very pretty account; a little fragment of ancient gallantry, blended with poetry and wit, which I think worthy of curiosity. Your Adhémars and Castellanes are every where to be met with; and we find the name of Grignan more considerable in the time of Frederic I. than in that of Lewis XIV. My son was much pleased with reading this account, and his wife still more so; I thank the prior of St. John's* for it, and you also, my dear child.

There was a letter from the marquis in the same packet, which highly delighted us; my son and his wife wanted to kiss and embrace him; they wished, particularly, that he might receive your permission to go to Paris; we cannot believe you will refuse him. His style is quite natural, juvenile, and artless; a few repetitions from a desire of pleasing; all his little reasons are ranged without exaggeration, and placed simply in their proper place and light; what his friends say of his remaining at Keiserslauter; his natural and just inclination to come and display a little the colonel of eighteen; all which is submitted in so affecting a manner to your will, that we could not restrain our tears, from affection and tenderness for this dear boy; and it appeared to us to be the most striking piece of elo-

* The abbé Viani, prior of the church of St. John at Aix.

quence we had ever met with. But what is better than all, is the assurance he gives us of always preferring glory to pleasure; that if there were the least thing to be done, he would not think of leaving the army; and we find that he speaks the truth. There is no drawback to make in what he says, there is no corruption yet in his heart; all his sentiments are genuine, all his expressions have their proper weight: we could not bestow sufficient praises upon this letter, which I shall carefully preserve for you, nor sufficiently esteem the writer. I conclude that he is now at Paris, where I have a great desire to know how he acquits himself, and a still greater, to be informed of his conduct at Versailles. It is there that his dear uncle would be useful to him; but it is not the will of God: never was there so cruel or so violent an attack of the gout; how unfortunate! Has he not reason to regret what he himself loses, and his family by him? What patience must he not be master of, to endure constant and scarcely bearable pain, which you can compare only to the torments of hell; but which is sufficient to ensure Paradise, if considered as inflicted by Him who is the sovereign of all things, and to whom we should be entirely in submission!

But, my child, while we are upon a melancholy subject, I must tell you, that tears streamed from my eyes, when I pictured to myself the poor dean*, penetrated with grief, his heart overwhelmed and oppressed, saying mass for a brother then in the church, still quick as it were, and yet cold in his coffin, bleeding on every side.—Good heavens! what a thought!—Does the blood stream from a dead body? It must be so, since you say it. Behold then this streaming blood which

* The collegiate dean of Grignan.

does not, alas! demand *justice*, but *mercy*; and the poor dean, convinced of his religion, offering this great and pious sacrifice for a sinner, whose salvation is dear to him, and whose death is afflicting; and tremblingly asking mercy for him, who had not a single moment to implore it for himself. My child, this is an insupportable thought; nothing but distraction and dissipation can prevent its having the same effect upon every one. The more faith the dean possesses, the more he is to be pitied; but he would be still more to be pitied, if he had been above the fear of judgement. I recollect the mode of interment at the Feuillantines; all the pious nuns prostrated themselves three times, before they threw my poor cousin into the grave, and by groans and affecting prayers, entreated God to take pity on a wretched sinner; alas! what a sinner! Mademoiselle de Grignan was present: we thought we should dissolve in tears. But what folly to repeat so many useless things in so doleful a strain! I ask you a thousand pardons.

I now return to you, my child. I thought the word *Molinists* underlined, would have made you understand the contrary; I was a little too cunning. The two male visitors were very good companions, we had no altercations, we agreed in every thing, and had the pleasure of discussing and celebrating the greatest, the most important, and the most ancient truths of our religion. We constantly read Abbadie, and *l'Histoire Ecclesiastique*: the latter is the effect of the persuasions of the former; it is divine, and gives a new ardour to our faith.

It is a very fortunate thing for Paulina, not to have the defect of blushing! It has been, as you say, a real drawback upon your beauty, and upon mine when I was young; I found that, when not troubled with this ridiculous inconvenience, I would not change myself for

another. This is a persecution inflicted by the devil upon vanity: in short, my child, it drove you from balls and assemblies, though every one constantly raised you to the rank of a beauty; but your imagination was so struck, that you could not support it. Poor Paulina will not be very sensible of this advantage; I really think that people do not blush as they did formerly.

Beaulieu has waited on M. de la Trousse from me; he tells me, he took his time so well, that he was told to walk in; but that he heard him say at the door, "Do not let him come in; tell him, I thank madame de Sévigné for her compliment," and was sent away. Beaulieu has been very severe upon him for this affront, as he is every where well received, and minutely questioned respecting me: he is highly offended, and very angry, saying it is the order of the Holy Ghost that makes him so haughty; but that it was not necessary to send his mules and all his equipage into our stables to set fire to them, as at M. de Rochefoucault's. All he says upon this subject is quite natural and pleasant; and he has so cut and slashed M. de la Trousse, that I know not how he will get over it.

I always enclose you the abbé de Bigorre's little notes; though the marchioness d'Huxelles, and many others, give you all possible information; but this, I trust, cannot displease you. You have insensibly led me to relate to my son your conversation with Alliot upon *soufre nerval*; he is very much affected at it, and will tell you his feelings; for my own part, I shall never forget this scene.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Surely, my little sister, some accident would happen to you, if you were often to talk of Keiserslauter. I

know not why my mother concealed from me your adventures with M. Alliot; nothing ever delighted me more. That expression, so seriously uttered by a woman who is eagerly consulting about her husband's health, constantly presents itself to me in a way I cannot describe to you; and I can compare it to nothing but the grave account my mother gave, at Madame's, of the ball where the duke of Monmouth was present. Your sister-in-law, in attempting to speak the name of this specific, calls it *du soufre nerveux**; you must agree that this is better than all. How sorry I am that it can be of no use to the chevalier de Grignan! how I pity him! I desire you, my beautiful little sister, to give him a hundred compliments, and embrace him and the graceful Paulina for me by proxy, —is not this allowable at two hundred leagues' distance? Adieu, my little sister; my mother is perfectly well; we manage her in such a way, that you will have nothing to do but to imitate us, when she is with you. I send a thousand and a thousand sincere compliments to the wise, illustrious, and *happy* La Garde.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ CONTINUES.

And so do I, my dear child. The sorrows and infirmities which overwhelm him, do not prevent me from thinking him *happy*, when I consider the use he makes of them. I conjure him to honour me still with his friendship. The diminution of his income arising from his estate, astonishes me; it is greater than ours, though ours is bad enough. Is yours fallen in like manner? pray tell me. Explain to me also how it is, that when M. de Grignan is with you, there should be eighty or a hundred in your solitude. You say that your affairs

* Nervous sulphur.

require another remedy besides being at Grignan; this I know as well as you. My health is good, think of your own. I should not be much astonished, if, for the last month, you awoke just before daybreak; at half past six, or seven: this would be as agreeable to me as to you; but to wake at four or five, is not what I call sleeping, but heating the blood. I believe, in fact, Boreas calls to you, "What business have you in my palace? why are you not at Paris, Versailles, or Aix?" It is cruel of him to fill your apartments with smoke. M. de Carcassonne appears to me to have as military a turn as archbishop Turpin.

Poor madame de la Fayette has not yet felt the sweets of her new little household; she has not yet got the better of the colic: Croisilles writes to me for her; her ill state of health renders her insensible to every thing else. She is a very amiable worthy woman, whom you loved as soon as you were acquainted with her wit and understanding: the more we know her, the more we love her. How we have laughed, and been amused with her wise nonsense! do you recollect it? When she mentions you and old times, she places you at the head of every thing that is sensible and agreeable; but she is too ill to exert her faculties.

Madame de Motteville is dead; will you not write to her brother? I know not how to blame M. d'Aix for what he says as an apology for not coming to Grignan, when he is at the very gate—"How unfortunate I am, and how much to be pitied!" Well, he is in the right; but if you can be satisfied with him, I advise you to be so—it is very unlucky to have always to complain of enemies at court. Adieu, my dear child; I love you as your friendship deserves, and your person, which is truly to my taste.

TO M. DE GRIGNAN.

Good morrow, my dear count; so you are now at your chateau, which was in ancient times a place where Frederic granted infeoffments. The first stone has long since been fixed, and the archbishop intends to place the last. Are you not sorry to be absent from Aix and *Chimène?* No, for you saw her upon Mount Psyché. You are in such good company, that you forget the north wind, and its fury; but I conjure you to let the marquis come and see you this Lent. My son constantly adores you, and his wife coquets with your picture; she said to my daughter the other day, "I will say nothing affectionate to M. de Grignan, for I find I have so great a love for him that I hesitate." It is thus you stand in this little corner of the world.

LETTER *DCCCCLXII.

FROM M. DE CORBINELLI TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Paris, January 6, 1690.

I wish you, Sir, as happy a year as you deserve to have; and I entreat you to believe, that the revolution of a thousand ages would find me still with the same feeling; I say as much to madame de Coligny. I have read your reflections upon public affairs with pleasure. I wish the king could have seen your letter to me. I think father Bouhours' work, *Pensées Ingénieuses*, excellent; but without your assistance it would not have been half so good. Madame de Sévigné will not return till next summer. I dined yesterday at M. de Lamoignon's, with Despréaux, Racine, and two famous Jesuits. Ancient and modern works were talked of; Pascal alone was opposed to Cicero, Seneca, and the

divine Plato. The conversation would have been worthy of you. I opposed Fra Paolo to them all, and I will not abate a title: many connoisseurs are of my opinion.

LETTER * DCCCCLXIII.

FROM THE COUNT DE BUSSY, M. D'AUTUN, AND MESDAMES DE TOULONJON AND DE COLIGNY, TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Autun, January 6, 1690.

A PARTY of your friends and relations, madam, being assembled together to celebrate Twelfth-day, after having wished you were among them, proposed the pleasure of writing to you, as one of their ...ements. They are persons who have some reputation for wit, and it is for this reason they wish to converse with you. The number of aggressors need not alarm you, madam; you have already seen, and you are again upon the point of seeing, that a single head, that thinks well, takes proper measures, and has no allies to thwart him, succeeds better than confederates. But, in plain language, you will have as little difficulty in answering us, as the king in beating the emperor.

We are anxious to know if you think of returning to Paris. We know you went to Britany with the duchess de Chaulnes, and that she went from thence to Rome to join her husband. Not one of us has believed that you wished to accompany her in the journey, knowing that

Rarement, à courir le monde,
On en devient plus gens de bien*.

* By running about the world, we rarely grow the richer.

Were you pleased at the increase of cash? It was only a subject of rejoicing to me, as it concerned my friends, whose purses were full the moment the edict was published. Will the beautiful Madelonne spend the winter in Paris? This is an article of consequence to you; and to us, madam, on account of the interest we take in it. If you wish to know what sort of life we lead, we must tell you that the greater number of us are very merry, and that we are all so in some degree; but that we shall soon separate to think of our affairs. Not a day passes in which we do not meet to play at cards, and talk of the news. We sometimes enter upon subjects of morality and religion, but never theologically. New-year's gifts have occupied a portion of our time; for we have mutually given and received them; [illegible] the manner has been more than the matter.

The truth must be owned, madam, this is passing life pleasantly; it appears short: we must, however, labour after something more substantial than amusement. On this we are all resolved; but some take things to heart more than others. There are certain persons among us who will pardon themselves nothing, and you may guess who they are*. There are others more in-

* This refers to madame de Coligny. The strange suit she defended, has been seen in the Letter of the 1st of March, 1694. But when Bussy says she pardons herself nothing, there is every appearance that he speaks only of the fault she had committed in marrying without his consent, and not of what ought to have been the object of her perpetual remorse, the unworthy obstinacy in which she persisted, of robbing her unfortunate child of his rights, and causing him to be declared illegitimate by the sentence of the court. This was nothing to Bussy, in comparison with a degrading alliance. He would willingly have said, as mademoiselle Dutillet did to madame de Termes, a Chabot by birth, who married a president for her second husband, and who assigned her being with child by him as a reason for this step: "Six bastards would have disgraced you less, than a legitimate child by such a marriage."

dulgent; but though they differ upon the means of salvation, they all agree in the respect and regard they entertain for you.

LETTER *DCCCCLXIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES, AT ROME.

The Rocks, January 8, 1690.

What a melancholy date, my amiable cousin, compared with yours! it suits a recluse, like me; and that of Rome suits one whose fate is to wander uncontrolled, and "who stalks his idleness from one end of the world to the other." What a happy life! and how mildly has Fortune treated you, as you say, notwithstanding her quarrel with you! Always beloved, always esteemed, always carrying joy and pleasure along with you, always the favourite of, and fascinated with, some friend of consequence, a duke, a prince, or a pope, for I will add the holy father by way of novelty; always in good health, never at the charge of any one, no business, no ambition; but, above all, the advantage of not growing old! this is the height of felicity. You doubt sometimes whether you are not advancing, by certain calculations of time and years; but old age is still at a distance: you do not approach it with horror, as some persons I could name; this is reserved for your neighbour, and you have not even the fears that are usually felt at seeing a fire in your neighbourhood. In short, after mature reflection, I pronounce you the happiest man in the world. This last journey to Rome is, in my opinion, the most delightful adventure that could have happened to you, with an adorable ambassador (the duke de Chaulnes) on a noble and grand occasion; and a visit to the beautiful mistress of

the world, whom, having once seen, we are always longing to see again. I very much like the verses you have made on her; she cannot be too highly celebrated. I am sure my daughter will approve them; they are well written, and poetical: we sing them. I am delighted with what you tell me of Paulina, whom you saw at Grignan in your way; I have judged most favourably of her in your praises, and the unaffected letter you wrote to madame de Chaulnes, which she has sent to me. Oh, how much I should like to take a journey to Rome, as you propose! but then it must be with the face and air I had many years ago, and not with those I now have. A woman, particularly, should not move her old bones, except to be ambassadress. I believe that madame de Coulanges, though still young, is of the same opinion; but in my youth, I should have been in raptures at such an adventure: it is not the same with you; every thing becomes you: enjoy, then, your privilege, and the jealousy you excite, to know who shall be favoured with you. I will not waste my time in arguing with you on the present state of affairs; all the duke's prosperities have given me real joy: you fear precisely what all his friends apprehend, that, being the only one who can fill the place he holds with equal success and reputation, he will be kept in it too long. This apartment in your new palace creates new alarms; but let us do better, let us not anticipate evils: rather let us hope that every thing will happen as we wish, and that we shall all meet again at Paris. I was delighted with your remembrance, your letter, and your songs; write to me whenever it is agreeable and convenient: I take the liberty of sending this by the ambassadress; and I do more, my dear cousin, for under her protection I take the liberty of embracing my dear governor of Britany, and his excellency the

ambassador, with real affection, and without offence to respect: these high dignities do not intimidate me. I am sure he still loves me; God bless him, and bring him back again; these are my wishes for the new year. Adieu, my dear cousin, I embrace you; continue to love me, I wish it, it is my whim, and to love you more than you love me: but you are very amiable, and I must not place myself on a par with you.

LETTER DCCCCLXV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, January 8, 1690.

It is in your hands, my dear love, that my letters turn to gold; when they leave mine, I think them so heavy and so loaded with words, that I say, My daughter will not have time to read all this; but you flatter me too much, for I do not, in conscience, think I ought to believe all you say. In short, take care; such praises and commendations are dangerous; I will not at least conceal from you, that I prefer them to those of all the rest of the world. But let us be reconciled, for we seem to be somewhat at variance: I said you read *les Petites Lettres* superficially, but I repent; for they are too beautiful, and too worthy of you, not to have engaged all your attention. You also affront me, by supposing I have not read *les Imaginaires**; it was I who lent them to you; how charming and true they are! I have read them more than once; so that upon these mutual of-

* These Letters, attributed to Nicole, appeared in 1664. They gave Racine an opportunity to write two of them, which are still read with pleasure, and which show the extent of his understanding. It was thus, after having attacked the Jansenists, he became himself a very zealous Jansenist.

fence we may embrace; I see nothing that can prevent us from loving one another: is not this the advice of the chevalier, as he is our confidant? I am, indeed delighted at the amendment in his health: this sentiment is much stronger than my words. But to return to reading; it is our principal occupation; my son has a very accommodating quality, that is, he is very willing to read twice, or three times over, what he likes, and what suits his taste; by this means, he enters more deeply into its merits, learns it by heart, and as it were incorporates himself with it, and fancies he wrote it himself. He reads Abbadie with transport, admiring, all the while, the genius which could produce so fine a piece*: when we find an argument well conducted, well concluded, perfectly just, we think we rob you of it in reading it without you; "How this passage would charm my *sister!* would charm my *daughter!*" Thus we blend your remembrance in every thing that is superior, and this heightens its value. I pity you for not being fond of history; the chevalier is so, and it is a fine asylum against dulness; some histories are so grand, that we are very willing to go back a few ages: the diversity enlarges and improves the mind; it is this abridgement of subjects that obliges you to read Father Coton's Orations, and soon exhausts all your books. I wish you had not given your son a distaste for history; a knowledge of it is very necessary for a young man of his profession. He has written to me from Keiserslauter; good God, what a name! He does not yet seem certain of coming to Paris; he says a thousand pretty things to me, very well turned; he thanks me for the news I sent him, and tells me all the little misfortunes attending his retinue. I doat on this little colonel.

* His book upon the Truth of the Christian Religion.

Our abbé Bigorré earnestly entreats me to give credit to no one but to him, concerning the news from Rome. It is an insult to say that the holy father is a Spaniard, and that the ambassador is the dupe*; we shall see this, for it cannot be concealed, *this spread eagle* will show us on which side it wings its way. For my part I should be patient, if Avignon could return to you; what a happiness it would be, to marry Paulina with this brilliant name! I long to ask you how M. de la Trousse is; Beaulieu, you know, could not inform me.

In return, I must tell you that Corbinelli is more mystical than ever; he is far beyond St. Theresa; he has discovered that my grandmother†, in the height of her soul, was quite distilled in prayer; he has bought a book of Malaval's for me, of which neither my son nor I understand a word. In short, he is still the same man he has always been; he no longer writes to me; this

* The following anecdote sufficiently authorises these suspicions: Alexander VIII. being then only the signor Ottoboni, and having a great desire to be a cardinal, without it costing him any thing, had a garden, near which the donna Olympia often walked. At the door of this lady he had a friend, through whose means he engaged her to dine and breakfast in his garden. He prepared for her a very elegant repast, and a sideboard on which were her arms. She immediately perceived it, and considered the sideboard as her own; for it was the fashion to send her flowers or fruit in gilded vases, which were considered as presents also. On leaving Ottoboni's, the mutual friend said to the prelate, that Olympia understood his gallant intention, and was delighted at it. Ottoboni took his friend into his cabinet, and showed him a beautiful pearl necklace, saying, "This will go with the sideboard." A few night after a promotion took place, in which Ottoboni was included; and he immediately sent the pearl necklace to the jeweller, and erased the arms of Olympia from his plate.

The signora Olympia Maldachini was sister-in-law of pope Innocent X. (Pamphili); she had great influence over him. France was scarcely less duped than she, and the pope Ottoboni was as ungrateful as Ottoboni the cardinal.

† Jane-Frances Fremiot, baroness de Chantal.

taste has subsided; I hear of him, and as I have writing enough, we have agreed upon this silence, without prejudice to our prescribed friendship; that, you know, cannot be disowned.

As to delicate constitutions, they deserve to be confided in; I sincerely own to you that after the situation in which I have seen mademoiselle de Meri, I begin to think her immortal; and considering the prudence of madame de la Fayette, and the attention she pays to her health, I am of opinion that she will get the better of all her complaints. God grant she may; she is an excellent friend, and worthy of our love and esteem. But now to my health; this should make you tremble: God has continued it to me so perfect, that I am surprised, and it would alarm me if I were as attentive to myself as you are to me. I was yesterday in our charming walks, and the weather was as fine as in September: I do not let these fine days escape me: when the weather changes, I keep my room; in this respect, I am no longer the same: I formerly made a foolish vow to go out every day. I already dread the departure of the chevalier, and M. de la Garde. Explain to me a little more fully how it happened that the pension of the latter was stopped: have they ceased to pay it, without assigning a reason? must a poor man accustomed to this comfort, be left to starve, without being told a syllable? It grieves me, but there are some things which require explanation. Our good Berbisi* writes me wonders of you and your grandeur: a president and two counsellors of the parliament of Dijon have been in Provence; they were disappointed at not meeting you, but they sounded your praise to our good presi-

* President à Mortier to the parliament of Dijon. Madame de Sévigné's great-grandmother was a Berbisi, and mother of Jane-Frances Fremiot, baroness de Chantal.

dent, who is entirely devoted to you. My daughter-in-law is gone to Rennes for a few days upon a relation's taking the veil; she was sorry to go; she has taken her trinkets to the mint, like the rest. Your brother desires to be kindly remembered to you. I have just been writing to Coulanges; he is quite fascinated with the prince de Turenne; do not be displeased, chevalier; it is to degrade this name, that I do not say M. de Turenne *.

LETTER DCCCCLXVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, January 11, 1690.

Good heavens! what a new year's gift! what wishes! what could be more calculated to charm me? I will tell you a feeling I have just discovered in myself; if it could repay yours, I should be satisfied, for I have no other coin: instead of the kind fears which the frequent deaths that surround you occasion, and which make you think of others, I offer you the real consolation, and even the joy, which frequently arise to me from my being older than you. The thought that the oldest goes first, and that I shall probably and naturally keep my rank with my dear child, constitutes the true charms of this feeling. What have I not suffered, when your ill state of health made me dread a reverse of the order of nature? These were trying times; let us talk no more of them; you are well, God be

* It is well known that Lewis XIV. had given the title of prince to the viscount de Turenne. The nobility were offended at this preference. They were still more so, when, after that time, he affected to refuse the title of marshal of France, and to take only that of prince: thus can nobiliary pride (l'orgueil nobiliaire) degrade the noblest minds.

praised; and every thing has resumed its natural course. *God preserve you;* I believe you hear my tone of voice, and know me.

I now come to the chevalier; I have no hesitation in believing that the climate of Provence would agree with him better in winter than that of Paris. All those who, like swallows, fly to your sunshine, afford sufficient testimony of this. But, while I rejoice at his being sensible of the difference, I am grieved at his having lost a thousand crowns of his income; and by what means? was his regiment worth so much to him? He will sell it then to the marquis*; but will not the money arising from it, in payment of debts, diminish the interest of loans? Settle this account for me, which makes me uneasy; I cannot figure to myself the chevalier de Grignan at Paris, without his genteel and neat little equipage; I cannot see him walking on foot, nor inquiring for places to Versailles; such an idea cannot enter my head; this article is interlocutory; ah, how happily this term of chicanery finds admittance here! Neither do I comprehend your sixty-four people, besides guards; you deceive me, this cannot be your meaning, you must give me a mathematical demonstration.

With regard to Paulina, you cannot surely hesitate respecting the choice you have to take, between good and evil. The superiority of your understanding will easily point out to you the true road: every thing leads you to your duty; honour, conscience, and the power you possess. When I consider how much she has corrected herself in a short time to please you, and how much she is improved, you will be answerable for all the good she neglects. As to reading, you are too

* The chevalier de Grignan, attaining the rank of field marshal in 1688, had leave to keep his regiment, that he might afterwards resign in favour of the marquis de Grignan his nephew.

much engaged in conversation and discussion to attend to it: we are more quiet here, and therefore have leisure for it. I even read works I had slightly run over at Paris, and which appear quite new to me. We also read, by way of interlude to our grand lectures, scraps that we meet with, such as the fine funeral orations of M. de Bossuet*, M. Fléchier†, M. Mas[illegible]on‡, father Bourdaloue: we pay a fresh tribute of tears to M. de Turenne, madame de Montausier, the prince, the late Madame, and the queen of England; we admire the portrait of Cromwell: these are master-pieces of eloquence, which charm the mind. You must not say, "These are old;" they are not old, they are divine. Paulina should be made acquainted and delighted with them; but this is calculated solely for the Rocks. I know not what book to recommend to Paulina: Davila is fine in Italian, we have read it; Guicciardini is very long; I should like the anecdotes of Medicis, which are an abridgement, but they are not in Italian. I will not name Bentivoglio again§; let her confine herself to poetry, I do not like Italian prose; to Tasso, Aminté, *il Pastor fido*, &c. I dare not add Ariosto, there are some bad passages in it; let her also read history; let her cherish this taste, which may long preserve her from idleness: it is to be feared that if this part of reading were suppressed, there would be scarcely any thing to read; let her begin with the life of Theodosius the Great, and let her tell me how she likes it. This, my child, is a letter of trifles; we set apart some days for chatting, without offence to serious matters, in which

* The bishop of Meaux. † The bishop of Nismes.

‡ The bishop of Agen.

§ Gui Bentivoglio, cardinal, and author of the Civil Wars in Flanders, and several other works.

we always take true interest. Adieu, my beloved child: we wish you every happiness this year, and many more.

LETTER DCCCCLXVII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, January 15, 1690.

You are right, I cannot reconcile myself to the date of this year; it has, however, been already begun for some time; and you will find, that, let us pass it as we may, we shall soon find the bottom of the bag that contained the thousand livres *.

You really spoil me, and so do my Paris friends; the sun has scarcely gained upon us a barley-corn, before you tell me, when you shall expect me at Grignan; and my friends desire me to fix from that hour the time of my departure, in order to hasten their joy. Such pressing civilities flatter me highly, and particularly yours, which admit of no comparison. I will, then, sincerely confide to my dear countess, that between this and September, I cannot entertain a thought of leaving this country; this is the time when I send my little means to Paris, of which only a very small part is gone. This is the time when the abbé Charier is treating for my fines and sales, which amount to ten thousand livres; but more of this hereafter; let us content ourselves with driving away every hope of taking the least step before the time I have mentioned. I will not, however, say that you are my goal, my perspective; you know it well, and that you are so firmly rooted in my heart,

* Madame de Sévigné compared the twelve months of the year to a bag with a thousand livres, which is exhausted almost as soon as it is opened.

that I fear M. Nicole would find much difficulty to prune you away; this, in short, is my disposition. You use the most affectionate expression possible to me, in hoping you may never see the end of the happy years you wish me. We are very far from agreeing in our wishes; for I have informed you of a very just and very proper truth, which God will, doubtless, grant, and which is to follow the natural order of providence; this is my comfort through the thorny road of old age: mine is a rational feeling, and yours too extraordinary and too kind a one.

I shall pity you when M. de la Garde and the chevalier are no longer with you; they are excellent companions; but they have their reasons, and that of bringing to life the pension of a man who is not dead appears to me very important. You will have your child with you, who will suit his station at Grignan very prettily; he must, for various reasons, meet a kind reception there, and you will, no doubt, heartily embrace him. He has written me another charming letter to wish me a happy new year; he appears quite forlorn at Keyserslauter: he says, nothing prevents his coming to Paris, but waiting for orders from Provence: that this is the main spring which sets him in motion. You seem to make him wait a long while; his letter is dated the second instant, and I supposed him at Paris; let him go there, and after having made his appearance, let him fly to embrace you. This little man seems to me qualified for a good match, and if you should find one for him, you may easily obtain his majesty's permission for the reversion of your noble post in his favour. You find that his disposition and Paulina's are very dissimilar; they must necessarily, however, both be possessed of certain qualities of the heart; temper is another consideration. I am de-

lighted that the marquis's sentiments please you; I could wish him a greater taste for the sciences, and reading, but this may come in time. As to Paulina, that devourer of books, I had rather she should swallow bad ones, than have no love for reading; romances, plays, Voiture, Barrasin, have all been exhausted; has she dipped into Tristan? is she capable of enjoying *les Petites Lettres?* History should come next, and if she does not find her account in this, I pity her. If she does not like the finest works of devotion, so much the worse for her, for we know but too well, that even without devotion ourselves, they are charming. With respect to ethics, as she would not make so good a use of it as you, I would not have her meddle either with Montaigne, Charron, or any others of his stamp; she is too young. The true morality of this age, is what we learn in conversation, fables, history, and example. If you were to bestow a little of your time upon her in conversation, she would reap greater benefit from this, than from all the rest. I know not whether what I say is worth your reading, I am very far from being wedded to my opinion.

You ask me if I am still a little devotee, of little worth; indeed I am, and to my regret am nothing more. All my goodness consists in knowing my religion, and its signification: I cannot be imposed upon by false for true religion; I separate the shadow from the substance: I hope I am not mistaken in this, and that God, having already endowed me with good sentiments, will continue them to me; past favours, in some measure, guarantee me for those to come; so that I live in confidence, blended, however, with some fear. But I must scold you for saying our Corbinelli *is the devil's mystic;* your brother is bursting with laughter, and I scold him as well as you. How! *the devil's mystic!* a

man who thinks of nothing but destroying the empire of the devil; who constantly attaches himself to his foes, the saints of the church; a man who sets no value upon his body, who endures poverty with a *Christian*, or, what you would call *philosophic*, resignation; who never omits celebrating the perfections and existence of God; who never judges his neighbour, but always excuses him; who passes his life in the exercise of charity and usefulness, insensible to pleasure and the enjoyments of life; who, in short, notwithstanding his ill fortune, is wholly resigned to the will of God! and this you call being *the devil's mystic!* You must own, that this is not the portrait of our poor friend; the expression, nevertheless, carries with it an air of pleasantry, which at first excites a laugh, and may surprise the ignorant. But I resist, as you see, and support the faithful admirer of Saint Theresa, of my grandmother, and the fortunate Jean de la Croix*. Now I mention Corbinelli, he wrote me a very pretty note the other day, giving me an account of a conversation and a dinner at M. de Lamoignon's; the performers were the host, M. de Troyes, M. de Toulon, father Bourdaloue, his companion, Despréaux, and Corbinelli. The subject was, the works of the ancients and moderns; Despréaux was an advocate for the ancients, with one single exception in favour of a modern; who, in his opinion, surpassed both the old and the new. Bourdaloue's friend, who presumed a great deal, and had joined Despréaux and Corbinelli, asked him what writer it was who held so distinguished a rank in his judgement? Despréaux would not say. Corbinelli joined with the Jesuit, and earnestly entreated Despréaux to name his author, that he might

* A Spanish prince, the intimate friend of St. Theresa, so sublime a theologian and spiritualist, that it was considered extreme vanity in his translator to have pretended to understand him.

read him night and day. Despréaux answered smiling: "Ah, sir, you have read him more than once, I am sure." The Jesuit resumed with a disdainful air, *un cotal riso amaro* (a bitter smile), and pressed Despréaux still more closely to name this wonderful author. Despréaux said, "Father, do not press me." The father persisted. At length, Despréaux took him by the arm, and squeezing him very hard, said to him, "Well, father, since you will know, it is Pascal." "Pascal!" said the father, reddening with astonishment, "Pascal is clever as far as falsehood can be so." "Falsehood!" resumed Despréaux, "falsehood! know that his work is as true as it is inimitable; it has lately been translated into three different languages." The father replied, "This does not make him a man of more veracity." Despréaux was heated, and exclaimed like a madman, "What, father! will you say, of one of your brethren having published in one of his books, that *a Christian is not obliged to love God**? dare you say this is false?" "Sir," said the father, in a rage, "you should discriminate." "Discriminate!" said Despréaux, "discriminate! zounds, discriminate! discriminate whether we are obliged to love God or not!" and taking Corbinelli by the arm, flew to the other end of the apartment; then returned, and walked to and fro like a man distracted, but without approaching the holy father, and at length joined the company in the dining-room: here the scene ends, and the curtain drops. Corbinelli has promised me the remainder when we meet; but being convinced that you will find this scene as humorous as I did, I send it you.

* This is one of the famous disputes which Despréaux is said to have supported in more places than one, upon the subject of the love of God, and was, perhaps, the first that gave rise to his idea of the epistle to the abbé Renaudot, which he did not write till 1695. See Ep. XII. of Despréaux, and 10th of the Provincial Letters.

and if you read it in a good humour, I am sure you will be pleased.

I am informed that several duchesses and great ladies have been enraged, that, though at Versailles, they were not at the supper on Twelfth-night; these are what are called miseries. You know the other news better than I do. I have sent Bigorré's note to Guilbrie, who returns you a thousand thanks; he is satisfied with your Court of Love. I consider Paulina very clever in being able to play at chess; I am afraid she would hold me in contempt, if she knew how much this game is beyond my capacity.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

I AM very much of your opinion, my little sister, respecting the *devil's mystic;* I was struck with the expression; I had turned the idea on every side, and could say nothing to please myself upon it. I thank you for having taught me to explain, in so few words and with so much propriety, what had so long been revolving in my mind. But what I admire the most in this *mystic* is, that his tranquillity in this state is the effect of his devotion; he would have some scruples to emerge from it, because he is of the order of Providence, and it would be impious in a simple mortal, to pretend to act in opposition to its dictates; we may therefore conclude that he will never go to mass, as the delicacy of his conscience would be hurt thereby. As you have, at length, allowed Paulina to read the Metamorphoses, I advise you to be no longer uneasy respecting the books that may be put into her hands. Has she not a taste for all pretty histories? there are a thousand little works that amuse and adorn the mind. Would she not find pleasure in reading many passages of the Roman History? has she read the his-

tory of the Triumvirate? are the Constantines and Theodosiuses exhausted? How I should fear for her active and lively mind, if you did not exercise it! As she has the vulgarity, like her uncle, not to bite at the subtleties of metaphysics, I pity her, but do not think I blame or despise her: I have reasons not to do so. My beloved little sister, adieu.

LETTER DCCCCLXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, January 18, 1690.

You have too many apprehensions for a state of health, which was never so perfect before; but this is the real cause of your alarm, and makes you find more security in the delicacy of others. My poor child, we are all mortal; but I admired, the other day, with what truth you told me that it was never for yourself that you feared death, to which we are all sentenced; that this never entered your thoughts: this is so extraordinary, that, after having admired you, I dread your indifference with regard to yourself, and conjure you to think of your preservation, in favour of those who are advanced so far before you, that you can never reach them: my idea is more just and natural than yours.

Is it possible that you can find no purchasers for your company? This will very much embarrass you and the chevalier, and is a great proof of the extreme poverty of the times. M. de Pomponne wrote to me like a good friend, at the beginning of the year; he told me he had not the least doubt that I should pass the winter here, as I could never have more substantial reasons for my stay. Every thing however has its limits, and I should be glad to see the care you bestow on your turkeys; it

is a great pity to be so good, and yet absent, and this from necessity: let us then own, that this is a very disagreeable period. I am very desirous that you should have your son with you, he has languished too long in that tormenting place that is so difficult to write*; let him go straight to you, and he can return with the chevalier. When I observed the latter, disposing of himself for the winter, as if he were a different man; chalking out the time, and taking the necessary measures for his departure; I wondered at his having forgotten how winter acts upon him, and supposed it would not be long before he discovered he had reckoned without consulting the gout; he excites in me more compassion, than I am willing to tell him. I can easily conceive that the duties of the mistress of the house may sometimes divert you from the office of nurse; but duties must be fulfilled on all sides, and you are never deficient here. I think you are very happy in having M. de la Garde. You say many things to him, that you could tell to no other person; this is a great consolation. I conjure him to believe that it was only the errors in which you left him, that made me complain unjustly; I have long loved and revered his merit. I wish you had by accident preserved the letters I wrote to you, respecting the deputation, in which I apostrophised M. de Grignan for assistance; I should desire you to show him this enthusiasm. I spoke truly however, and I wonder at your idea, that, if you were king, you would deprive the governor of Britany of this nomination. Yet you find that no king, from the time of Charles the Eighth, ever thought of doing so; and, except when an enemy is desirous of distinguishing himself by such an insult, no one ever thinks of coming to ask the king

* Keyserslauter. A town in the Lower Palatinate, taken by the French in 1688.

the name of the person whom all Britany, in full assembly, appoints to pay their homage to the king. Is it not natural for a governor in his province to choose his deputies? does not the governor of Languedoc and of other places do the same? and why, then, should this distinction exist with regard to Britany, which has always been free, whose prerogatives have been always preserved, and which is as considerable by its extent as its situation? In short, did not our great heiress* deserve to have her marriage-contract faithfully executed? For my part, I can perceive no harm that this proceeding could do to the king's service, being similar to the rule observed in all other provinces; if I were in his majesty's place, I should prefer the ancient custom to be kept up, and that the governor of Britany should choose a native of the province, to come and pay the compliments of the province. But M. de Grignan, and you, my child, have deserted me; this, indeed, I should never have suspected from you, who are so situated as to feel these alterations; I thought you would follow the example of M. de la Rochefoucault, &c. But my suit is trampled on, it is not examined, I am tried without mercy, and am deprived of my principal judge; I am going to write *false* upon the arret of the parliament of Toulouse, as Buri said; I will avenge myself instantly; this is the fact. There is a person who has certainly a great share of wit, but it is so delicate and so easily disgusted, that she can only read five or six sublime and exquisite works of distinguished reputation. She cannot endure history; a great misfortune, for it affords pleasure to all the world: she has another misfortune, she cannot read twice the very books which she prefers

* Anne, duchess of Britany, daughter and heiress of duke Francis II. and Margaret de Foix, married Charles VIII. king of France, as her first husband, and Lewis XII. successor of Charles VIII., as her second.

to all others. This person says she is insulted, when she is told that she is not fond of reading; this is another cause to try. But speaking of books, my dear Paulina, I have found what will do for you: it is the Life of Pope Sixtus the Fifth, in Italian; I have read it with pleasure; it has just occurred to me. Is it not true, my child, that this book will amuse her? Good heavens! how handsome and entertaining I think this little girl! how I long to see her!

For a fortnight past we have had hurricanes that have dismayed us; I have not been able to walk; and on the day I saw the sun perish in that thick cloud, after having shone all the day, could I do better in your service than fly as I did? You are a thankless girl, if you do not preserve your health, out of gratitude. I enclose you a letter of thanks from my good abbé Charier; had he written to you as he writes to me, you would have liked the natural simplicity of his style; but your sublime wit has embarrassed him in a *sun* and an *atom*: do not fail to answer him; pay him for me, and assure him that your *sun* will always be very attentive to his *atom*; that you shall always see in him the son of his father, and a man to whom your mother has many obligations.

Your brother sees only such parts of your letters as I am willing to show him; I need only say there is nothing here that will amuse him, and he inquires no farther. His wife is still at Rennes, where she is detained a prisoner on account of the floods: she is quite vexed at it. We do not compare our sun with yours: we know what degree we are in, and that your days are neither so long, nor so short, as ours. Adieu, my dear love; it seems to me that you must feel how much I love you, and that I need not tell you: it is not however always possible to suppress it.

LETTER DCCCCLXIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, January 22, 1690.

Good heavens, what a situation you are in! how pressing a one! and how much and sensibly I am grieved at it! But, my child, how weak and futile are wishes upon such occasions! and how needless it is to tell you, that if I had now, as I have had, some portable sum which depended on me, it should soon be yours! I am overwhelmed with a host of little creditors who dun and threaten me, and I do not know whether I shall be able to satisfy them, as I had hoped to do; for I am quite suffocated by the obligation I am under of paying immediately 5000 livres by way of fine, and the price of the estate of madame d'Acigné, which I have purchased, to avoid paying 10,000 if I had waited two years longer. Such, then, is my situation; but this is only to acquaint you with the utter impossibility of my assisting you. Your brother appears to me to feel for you, and I am persuaded he would perform his duty better than your rich prelates, if the times were as they have been, that is, if it were possible to borrow. He will talk to you himself, and tell you his opinion of your affairs. I have also set forth to him the embarrassments of your little colonel; he mentioned the subject to me the first, some time ago, pitying and regretting, like us, that the chevalier had not the management of him for the first year or two; nothing could have been of so much service to him as such a master; in short, my dearest child, no one but God can confine so great a number of disagreeable things within the bounds of resignation, in which you appear to me. To

return to my son; he had some anxiety on seeing a stripling of seventeen or eighteen at the head of such a troop. He remembers enough of past times, to know how difficult it is at that age to command old officers; and this difficulty would have been removed, if he could have had his uncle to establish him: this is a very disagreeable and delicate time for him. Cannot you assist him with some prudent counsellor, to advise him a little? For, in short, he is alone, and cannot at his age know a profession that requires more experience than any other. I have conjured you to send for the marquis to Grignan; what will he do during the carnival at Paris and Versailles? do you think he will acquit himself well of the duty and compliment he has to go through? I perhaps do him wrong; but he is very young, and little accustomed to this business: in short, I think he has more to perform than he is equal to. I resign the pen to my son, I will resume it again presently.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

The maternal uncle now writes to you himself, my dear little sister, and assures you with the greatest sincerity, that were he possessed of the fortune that is his due, that is, if land were money, and not a mere song, an illusion, &c. you would see by some very strong proofs, how much I interest myself in what regards you; but, alas! my beautiful dear, I am surrounded only by people whom I may imprison, who entreat me to do it every day, who live in places belonging to me, who pray for me, as they say, and, at the same time, assure me, that as to money, I must not think of it: such is my situation. If, however, by some not impossible event, I should be reimbursed a certain sum that I

am promised, you may be assured that I will apply it in such a way as to rouse the paternal uncles, who, in the midst of forty and fifty thousand livres a year, see you groan, without doing any thing but praying for you as my farmers pray for me. Good heavens! why do they not neglect their buildings a little, which they will quit sooner than they suppose, and why do they not think of supporting the only prop of their house for the future? Were I to dwell longer upon this subject, I should be in a rage; I will therefore discontinue it, to tell you that I think your son very young, very inexperienced, very little calculated to support so great a burden as that with which he is laden—a regiment of twelve companies, at the age of eighteen! If he is mild, they will use him just as they please: if he is severe and haughty, let him beware of finding fault without reason; for, to exert authority, and to be in the wrong, subjects a man to great humiliation. If he is obliged to act with rigour, it must be at the utmost extremity; if he avoids this extremity, the consequences are dangerous, particularly with respect to the old soldiers. In short, I pity him: he is promoted too early in life, and this advancement is his misfortune; it would have been better, either that the chevalier had kept his regiment for some time, or that Providence had ordained that he were capable of serving, and consequently of attending to the conduct of this dear boy; all these monsters, these dragons, would then have disappeared, and roses and lilies would have sprung up in their place. I sincerely wish, my dear sister, that some joyful event may speedily happen to you, and that I may partake it with you, as I partake of your anxiety at this moment. I will not, I can assure you, lose any opportunity of diminishing it, if it be possible; and in this I will employ more zeal, than others do indifference and perhaps repugnance.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

I THINK what my son says is perfectly true. This place, which was the cause of our joy, occasions you great embarrassments to support it; but consider, my dearest child, for there are times when nothing must be left undone, that Bourbilly * is yours; this is a little spot that should have been kept for a rainy day; but you cannot be more distressed than you are at present. Have you properly disposed the good president of Berbisi †? Write to him, perhaps he may find means to procure you some money upon this mortgage: my signature shall not be wanting. This is all I can say to you, and the only thing I can do for you. It is in vain to talk to me of your health; it is impossible that you can sleep with so many dragons, without your blood being heated, and making cruel depredations. I am quite uneasy about you; and I also pity the chevalier: what a situation, and what an over-all is this rheumatism! M. de Grignan appears to me in perfect health. It is true, I thought M. de la Garde employed with his workmen; how could I guess at his situation? unless it had been told me, it was impossible. It is however to this circumstance that you owe the sweets and consolation of your society—though you are melancholy, it is some comfort to be so together. I wish you could know how much I feel your vexations though at the distance of two hundred leagues from you. But how ridiculously one writes at such a distance! I often relate ridiculous things, for the sake of chatting with you; and forget that you are overwhelmed with a thousand

* An estate in Burgundy, which belonged to madame de Sévigné.

† Président à Mortier of the parliament of Dijon, and a near relation of Madame de Sévigné.

subjects of uneasiness: I am really ashamed of myself. Madame de la Fayette mentions you and the chevalier to me in all her notes; she is far from well; she desires me to tell you all her grievances, and that she could not help being delighted at your son's having a regiment. Her little daughter-in-law was highly approved at Versailles, even by his majesty; she has given up every thing; she feels the charms and relief of this new family.

If you had seen the answer of M. d'Aix, you would have thought it very serious, and written in a style which does not at all resemble his, nor the letter I wrote him. The destiny of the man who would obstinately die at the foot of a tree, is frightful indeed; this was despair; he was stopped there as if by compact. Your account did not make me cry out; it astonished and affected me in a manner suitable to the subject. It is cruel of you to recollect Monfermeil; this is, without contradiction, the most ridiculous period of my life; have you no other in your imagination? Drive that away, I beseech you; it was a lot thrown upon me. Adieu, my best and dearest child; I am quite unhappy about you; and how can I be otherwise? Two years to elapse, without receiving your salary, besides all that you had to support, your arrears, and Paris, and, in short, every thing! This grand edifice was more in need of support, than it was necessary to build new ones. Inform me when you find a purchaser for your company. You say you hear no news. Does not the marchioness d'Huxelles constantly write to M. de la Garde?

LETTER DCCCCLXX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, January 25, 1690.

How I pity you, my dear child, for being obliged to read such dull letters! but I should pity you much more, if you preserved them; it would be curious if you were to do as you did at Sainte Marie. I knew that M. de Sévigné's horses had run away; this tells us, that we should hold young people with a tight rein: sister Pauline, this is for you. I was told that the sun set in a tremendous cloud on the 24th of December, strange circumstance! and that the fog was very thick; this informs us, sisters, that we should not walk at this season. This is all I can remember of the fine lecture, and all the moral that can be derived from it.

Your taste is blinded; mine is a better criterion by which to judge, when I say I like your style: without flattery, it may be said to be perfect, and that no one can write better; I am certain of what I advance, but I say no more on account of your menaces. You have thrown your verses at my head very opportunely, to amuse me, and divert me from attending to the shortness of your letter. I think them very pretty and gallant, and upon a new subject: my son is of the same opinion: we will send a copy of them to our friend Guébriac, who will be delighted with them, as he was with your Court of Love. One word more respecting our readings: yesterday we read the eleventh book of the first volume of M. Arnauld's *Perpétuité de la Foi* (Perpetuity of Faith); he answers some attacks and accusations thrown out against him by the minister Claude. Good heavens, what arguments! what harmony! how

he defeats his antagonist every moment! We thought of you, supposing that you would have been delighted, and that the book was worthy of you; and this was the eulogium we pronounced upon it.

I informed you, in my last, of my plan for extricating you out of your present difficulty; this is an idea which must be natural to you, and you may make what use of it you please; you know whether I shall want entreaty, when my signature is necessary. Our marquis is to be at Paris on Sunday the 22d. I am told he will be surprised to find, on his arrival, an order from Provence to go and join you; but I have so good an opinion of him, as to suppose he will be very happy to pay you this visit: and if it were otherwise, and he should have some regret at eighteen to leave the carnival, this very reason at eighteen would make me think it still more proper that his youth should be improved at this beautiful period in the bosom of his family; he is in a situation where he can no longer act the child, and I doubt that he still blends a little of this character with that of the colonel. He is not *done enough*, as madame de la Fayette says: another boiling up at the corner of your fire, will be of infinite service; and if it please God that he should return to Paris with the chevalier, it will be a great blessing to him: are not you of this opinion? You will have infinite joy in embracing this dear child, and not without reason. You have said not a word respecting the chevalier's health; this, perhaps, is a good sign. I rejoice with him that M. de Beauvilliers, after having nine girls, has at length had the wit to beget a son: he has followed the advice you gave to Guitaut; if he had been vexed, and changed the cards, he would never have had an heir; this fancy is laughable enough. One of yours last night made my son laugh heartily. It was upon

the flying report that M. d'Ormesson would be chancellor; "Brother," say you, "I wish my mother would marry him, she would then be the *chancellor's lady*, and we should go to Chaville." There is no explaining this flight, yet it almost killed us with laughter. This passage would have a fine effect in your *select* readings; I defy you to say it, and derive any benefit from it for the community. I now return to madame de Beauvilliers; if you or the chevalier have occasion to write to him again, it seems to me that a compliment you had received from Britany, in testimony of my joy, would be very natural, and shorter than the calculations that are sometimes made. Adieu, my love; God conduct this letter, and may it arrive at a time when your heart is somewhat at ease. It has snowed extremely for these two days; this is the first time I have imagined it was winter. My daughter-in-law is still at Rennes, blockaded by the snow.

LETTER DCCCCLXXI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, January 29, 1690.

Your letters are not yet arrived, at which I am melancholy and vexed, without being surprised: I am much more astonished when I see the couriers arrive in such tremendous weather. The waters have been so much out, that my daughter-in-law, tired with being detained at Rennes, ventured to return, and was bold enough to ford her way on horseback, and the water was so deep that her horse swam for several paces; instead of being well received after this exploit, she was severely scolded; she wanted to be drowned, and we, who know what drowning is, could not forgive her. She hopes that the

berr to which she exposed herself, will be the means of producing a reconciliation with you, for having left me for three whole weeks; she went with so much reluctance, that she deserves consideration even upon this score. We have been confined to the house for these ten or twelve days; but if it should be fine weather only for two days, we shall find the walks as dry as at Livri.

I had earlier intelligence than you of your son's arrival at Paris in good health. If it be true that the marquis waits for your answer to repair to Grignan, the carnival will be over. I send you what Beaulieu has written to me; as this extravagance made us laugh, we hope it will have the same effect on you. I send you also some more verses against gaming; but I always find, to the honour of Dangeau, that he is a constant exception to this almost general rule. I wish you could find a purchaser for your company: it is the constant cry, that there are times when the want of money is not perceptible throughout France; I, who begin to be of the contrary opinion, wish it were the case at present. M. d'Arles would be very happy, not to find any to build with; his council of conscience is very large, and very commodious, if he approves of this last loan; the residence, I think, might well be dispensed with; but what will be complete, and what I expect from the wise heads of that country, is that the archbishop will grant both: he will build, and not reside; he will borrow, and not pay. Fie, fie, as you say, upon foolish heads, that spoil all, and even destroy society! It was your fault that I did not do justice to M. de la Garde sooner, and I scold you for it; would you have me possessed of the gift of divination? I reasoned justly, according to appearances. Secure me the friendship of this good and holy man; you are bound to do so. You have not told me at what game the trea-

surer of your province ruined himself: with our poet Harouïs*, it was from a desire to please every body; this was his foible; he found it was impossible to refuse. I do not excuse him, but this shows, at least, that the best things in the world may be perverted, when they are not regulated by judgement; but it is so rare a failing, that never, perhaps, will such another example be met with, founded on the abuse of true generosity. You are prudent, my child, in continuing at Grignan; this may be called consulting our council of conscience: those who robbed madame de la Fayette did not consult theirs; they took from my poor friend, who was gone to lie down from languor after dinner, five hundred crowns in louis-d'ors, which were in a little cabinet, to which none had access but her two maids, her valet-de-chambre, and footman. She can suspect no one of these: they have all been interrogated, but without effect; and she still lives with these people, which is most unpleasant; for the loss of the money would create no great inconvenience, as her children are so capable of assisting her directly with such a sum; but to be still served by a person who has made so free with her cash, is enough to disturb a woman already oppressed with so many complaints. I knew that M. de la Trousse kept his chamber; can this be called a cure? Beaulieu highly extols the marquis's conduct, but he has not yet forgiven M. de la Trousse. M. du Bois† has sent me his book upon *la Véritable Religion* (True Religion), and the *Mœurs de l'Eglise Catholique* (Manners of the Catholic Church), translated from St. Augustin. The name of this saint, and the reputation of the translator, will induce us to read it; though after

* Treasurer-general to the states of Britany.

† Philip Goibaud-du-Bois, of the French academy, author of several translations of St. Augustin and Cicero.

Abbadie, Pascal, and *l'Histoire de l'Eglise* (the History of the Church), it is almost martyrdom; at least we think it so, our minds are so biassed in their favour.

I wish you as good a state of health as I enjoy; all my little ridiculous complaints have disappeared: when it pleases God, they will return; but I tell you my present situation. We have good milk here, and good cows; we are much disposed to skim the cream off this good milk, and to mix it with coffee and sugar; this, my child, is a very good thing, and will be a great comfort to me during Lent. Du Bois approves it for the stomach and colds, and this, in a word, is the milk-coffee, or coffee-milk, of our friend Alliot. This is all a person can say to you, who has no letter to answer, and who *hears and sees little*, like La Fontaine's pigeon*. But, my dear countess, I think much of you; I am wholly occupied with you; I feel every thing that concerns you, sensibly; I am always with you at Grignan; I pay my respects and compliments to all the inhabitants; I nurse the chevalier, pity him, make melancholy reflections upon his situation, and feel all the consequences; I converse with the count, whom I love better than he loves himself; I amuse myself with Paulina; I reflect with M. de la Garde; I give the prelates some raps on the knuckles; I sigh with the dean; I expect the marquis; and, above all, I passionately love my dear child; I praise her good head, her good conduct, and wish she may persevere in her fortitude.

* See the fable of the Two Pigeons, Fab. 17.

LETTER DCCCCLXXII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 1, 1690.

We have nothing but a succession of snow, rain, and winds that blow almost a hurricane; but when these tempests have subsided, the days will be long and fine; the worst is, that, let the weather be ever so good, and the time pass ever so swiftly, you cannot touch your revenues: good God, what a horrid anticipation! ninety and ninety-one, and as far as we can look forward*; never was there such a dissipation: we may be sometimes a little out of our road; but to be plunged over head, out of all reach, is a thing that ought never to be. Such a subject cannot be discussed at a distance, for answers are necessary; but we may sigh, and, whatever grief may await us, we would rather know all than live in ignorance. I want, as you say, the map and the key of your sentiments; I must enter into your affliction, friendship requires it. I comprehend that the only remedy that could be useful to you, would be fatal to your interest at court, and your reputation in the province: you know better than any one that this is not the proper way to fill a post, and that hiding yourself in your château, without knowing how to get out of it, is not the proper way to spend a whole winter. It is happy for you, as you said the other day, that the misfortunes of your poor friends soften yours; it is a great relief to be able to talk of them, and to receive mutual comfort from

* M. de Grignan being compelled, for the sake of his affairs, to transfer the salary of his post for the years 90 and 91, had retired to Grignan to pass the winter, instead of spending it at Aix and Marseilles, or taking a journey to court.

each other; but I am very sensible that, in your present situation, it is impossible to read, and it is only in jest that I tease you upon this subject; how is it possible to be amused with past times, when the present inflicts such bitter pangs? I know what this situation is; one reads the same page twenty times over; and I assure you, that, well as my son reads, I am so distracted, and take such frequent journeys into Provence, that I could easily comprehend your travels, if you were obstinately bent upon reading. All I wonder at is, that God preserves your health in the midst of so much oppression. How sincerely I pity you! for how fatal is the present state of your affairs to your poor boy's establishment! He is at length at Paris; it is true, he was somewhat tardy in leaving the garrison, but he is now paying his court at Versailles. I am informed that he hopes to sell his company; this is good news. I am always uneasy when I think of his being alone upon that great theatre; I imagine, after he has been there a short time, he will think of nothing but the pleasure of visiting you. Persevere, my love, in talking to me of yourself, without fearing to tire me; my friendship is better pleased to share your grief, than to be unacquainted with it. You walk about your buildings, and expose yourself to the north wind and the sun, as imprudently as if you had not *Wisdom** by your side. I have shown my son a letter in which he is mentioned; he says a thousand kind, and a thousand ridiculous, things for that part which relates to his wife; but I am not paid for wasting my time in telling you all these. Nothing can be more pleasant than what you say of the death of the marquis d'Alluie, and the consequences you draw from it to begin the assault; if I had said as much, you would have

* M. de la Garde.

made a great noise, and would have treasured it as you did the account of the visitation. I am very much pleased with Paulina's letter, I have not time to answer it to-day; you will laugh when I tell you I am in a hurry. It is true, that I am not often at a loss for time; but we have here at present two men of great sense; one has been ten years with M. d'Alet, the other is an advocate; these men would do well at Paris; I am going to receive them. The parliament of Rennes have this day met again in their fine palace, and the whole city re-echoes with acclamations, and is illuminated with bonfires. I answer my dear little Adhémar† with the greatest friendship; poor child! how happy she is, if she can be contented! there can be no doubt of this—but you understand me.

LETTER * DCCCCLXXIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, February 5, 1690.

This date will at first sight present to you a solitude and a desert. My son and his wife spend a considerable portion of their time here: they have both very good sense. It was here your letter (of the 6th of January) found me. But, my dear cousin, before I tell you what I am doing here, I must begin with the church, and I return a thousand thanks to our prelate‡ for the honour of his remembrance. I truly felt it: I had often thought of him; I even said so to the abbé de Roquette, who came to our states; but I stopped there, and, finding myself too distant to make myself understood, I contented my-

† Mary Blanche, eldest daughter of madame de Grignan. She was a nun at St. Mary at Aix.

‡ The bishop of Autun.

still with carefully preserving in my heart the sentiments of esteem and respect which are invariably felt for him by all who have the honour of knowing him. In this disposition, his name met my eye on opening your letter. I leave you to judge, sir, what joy and what gratitude I felt at his precious remembrance. After our prelate has seen this part of my letter, I conclude he will not have time to attend to the rest of it, and that, being now in his closet, attending to his own affairs, I may talk to you with my usual freedom. I see no one with you but madame de Toulonjon, and my niece, who do not deter me: I think you are in excellent company, and in such society there is no subject you might not discuss as well as in Paris. We have sometimes also very good conversations here. I came into this country, as you know, with madame de Chaulnes, ten months ago. I was often with her at Rennes, and she took me on a very pleasant excursion into Lower Britany. It was there the duke de Chaulnes received an order from the king, to repair immediately to court, and afterwards to Rome. This overturned all our plans of going to see the fleet at Brest. We returned very melancholy to Rennes, and on the 20th of August they set out for Paris. Madame de Chaulnes came here to take leave of me, where she slept, and quitted me with real sorrow. I had hoped to return with her as I came, but Providence had arranged otherwise.

You know the rest of what concerns the journey to Rome: I was left here with part of my family, in a charming house in the midst of my business, for I have two estates in this country. I have gained nothing by the raising of money; I had no plate to dispose of. The beautiful Madelonne is at her seat in Provence, and I am very quietly in this. I think I shall return to Paris towards the end of the summer. This is my mode of life, and my plan, God ruling over all. There is no-

thing I so earnestly desire as to be religious, and occupied with the only important work we all have to do. We have excellent books; but I own, that though my mind is thoroughly convinced of this great truth, my heart is not affected as I could wish it to be, and this state makes us feel how necessary to us is the grace of God. I am inclined to end here, my dear cousin; can I stop at a better place? every subject would appear frivolous after this. I trust, however, that the good God will not be displeased at my adding a word respecting my friendship for you, which is unabated, and will last to the end of my life. I seem not to have sufficiently embraced the two amiable women who are at your side.

LETTER DCCCCLXXIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

The Rocks, Sunday, February 5, 1690.

I STILL wonder, that notwithstanding all I know of the melancholy turn of your thoughts, you can write so freely, so pleasantly, and so humorously, as you do. Your brother is bursting at what you say of Corbinelli; and, like him, I think your comparison between the mystics and coiners, excellent indeed; the former, by dint of distilling their brains, evaporate into heretics; the latter, by blowing the fire, produce false money; if they both deserve a gibbet, I say that, with your St. Theresa, you would be at the foot of that on which my friend was hanged. But now for a quarrel: I deny the charge you bring against me, of saying *les Imaginaires**

* Eighteen letters of M. Nicole, entitled *Imaginaires et Visionnaires*, which, with all the ornaments of the *Petites Lettres*, are perhaps equal to them in eloquence and solidity.

ve e charming; I never made use of this expression. It is a *supposition, the subtleties of the sieur count de Grignan*, as the advocate said who pleaded for La Bury. I maintain it, I did not use the word *charming;* this is a supposition of the *dame countess de Grignan;* I said *fine,* and *very fine:* the justice of their reasoning claims this eulogium, and your praising them was sufficient to give me this idea of them. Thus you see the want of good faith; but I will read them again, and, at all events, the *grand council* will not fail me.

I am satisfied with your answers to all my questions, and should be sorry to have the same aversion you have to reading things twice over. I read your letters again and again, with all the sentiments they deserve, according to the different subjects; and sometimes you say such humorous things, that it is impossible not to laugh, as if the heart were light and unwounded: in short, I prefer this reading to the finest books in the world. You are astonished that I do not think of leaving this country before September; but consider that I am now in the very centre of my business in Lower Britany, and that the sun, which rises higher and higher every day, will soon bring this period round. You excite in me a strong inclination to talk nonsense, by entering so well into all I say; but you laugh too timidly at the *distinguo**; what are you afraid of? have they not livings enough? I hear your answer, the influence *of others* is more than all; well, be it so, but do at least like father Gaillard, and as they do at our neighbour's †, where the story was thought highly amusing. At length, my dear child, you will have your son with you, provided the king's journey to Compiegne does not interfere with that of Provence. He is paying his court, I

* The Jesuit who disputed with Boileau.

† M. de Lamoignon.

long to hear from him; he has very properly been to see madame de la Fayette, and madame de Chaulnes; is it possible to do better? I hope he will not forget madame de Lavardin, as you love my friends. I have heard your *mystic* (Corbinelli) praise the book on the Fallacy of Human Virtues, highly; he had seen it in manuscript, being a friend of M. Esprit*, whom he consulted in his works: he has told you a thousand times that this was an admirable book, but you attended to him no more than to his praises of Rochon; a taste for these things did not then prevail; there is a time for every thing. I would very willingly read this book upon his recommendation. We have just finished the history of the Conquest of Cyprus; a very pleasing and interesting work. I am only afraid that Paulina is not sufficiently informed of the affairs of Europe; but if she is, she will be delighted with this history. The translator is a relation of the comptroller-general (Pelletier); my son got through it in four days. Our carnival begins to-day; it consists in assembling five or six men and women of this neighbourhood: we shall play and eat, and if the sun should appear again, as it did yesterday, I shall walk with pleasure. The notes of the linnet, the tom-tit, and the wren, already begin to usher in the spring; this month is often milder than May, on account of your north-wind that torments us. At all events, then, we must give absolute credit to your fourscore guests; I believe, if there were too many, the chevalier and M. de la Garde would advise you to remove the supernumeraries; for in these years of the

* Jaques Esprit, of the French academy, author of a book entitled *la Fausseté des Vertus Humaines.*

This work is only a heavy commentary on the maxims of Rochefoucault. A man of genius drew a system from it, in the eighteenth century, more controvertible than condemnable.

[illegible]age to you, you should go on gently, to avoid digging new abysses. I shall pity you very much, when you lose the two Grignans; their society and counsel are a real comfort. Like you, I should be under apprehensions for M. de la Garde, with respect to the bird-lime of the faubourg St. Jaques*; in this respect there is nothing to be done, nor any precautions to take: it is the concern of the Holy Ghost alone. I want to know who is this mistress of my son, whom M. de Grignan has so unceremoniously called by a name which perhaps she does not deserve; for we can assure him, that he often thought himself in love, without ever being so. I can answer for it, that his heart never knew any real attachment till his marriage, to the great happiness of his wife and himself.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Ah! here I come at the very moment I am named: I take up the pen, and interrupt the discourse, which always appears too long when I am the subject of it. I begin by telling you, my little sister, that all your reflections on *the devil's mystic* are charming; he neglects what the vulgar call first duties, and soars straight to the seventh apartment of St. Theresa, where he distils and blows with all his might: he is still coining, we shall see whether he will some day obtain the philosopher's stone. Who was this *mistress*, that M. de Grignan took the liberty of naming so familiarly before M. d'Auch? Had you not her in your mind, when you wrote that your sister-in-law was gone to make either a devil or an angel, in assisting at her cousin's taking the veil?

* This faubourg was inhabited by Jansenists, and persons of rigid devotion, who might have torn M. de la Garde from his family, and from every tie of human affection.

Let things remain as they are, let us talk neither of angels nor devils; angels are very well in heaven, and the devil too is very well in his place. Let us leave the poor souls who are doing penance for our universal malice, in peace.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

My pen was taken from me: it is now restored; but I have little more to say, than to embrace you heartily, and thank you for all the expressions of kindness which I find in your unaffected and delightful letters. I have never wronged your heart, I know its value and perfection, and if I have given you a moment's uneasiness, you must forgive me. You seem to have changed your opinion, in regard to M. du Plessis*; tell me your reason; for I do not find he has committed any other folly than marrying. This is not a contagious disorder, and would not prevent his educating your second son properly: impart to me then why you have changed your sentiments; it is of consequence to madame de Vins. The poor abbé de Pile has died in your country; he went to drink the waters of Digne for vapours which were incurable.

My dear count, you spoil me, you destroy me, you praise me, you will make me a foolish woman puffed up with vanity; this is saying every thing. We love you too much here; my son would dispense with his wife's being so charmed with your perfections; we tell her of your air, your voice, your manners, which she understands but too well. For my own part, I should be extremely obliged to any one, who would deprive me of half my sensibility with regard to your interests.

* He had belonged to the oratory, before he was intrusted with the education of the marquis de Grignan. Madame de Vins had thought of him as tutor to her son.

LETTER DCCCCLXXV.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Ash-Wednesday, February 8, 1690.

Every thing else failing, my dear child, tell me immediately how it happens, that madame de Reinié * is still with you? Do you send for her to come and consult with you, as if she were in the rue St. Honoré, and you at the hôtel de Carnavalet, or as if the distance from Paris to Grignan were not greater than the distance from Paris to Livri? I cannot conceive what could have induced her to take this second journey. Poor woman! I really am not astonished that she has pains *all over her* †. Good heavens! what a dear child Paulina is! so pretty, so entertaining, so sprightly, so amiable. I can fancy I see all her perfections from hence. Without wishing to commend the quality of mimicry, I must confess that it is one of the things that afford the greatest mirth: as I am persuaded that Paulina will not make a bad use of this talent, and will confine the exercise of it to her family, I am not sorry that she possesses it; and I hope to enjoy it with you some day, *God willing* being however always understood. Her brother is a tolerable ape too, but he has other business upon his hands; he is taken up with his soldiering: you will see what the abbé says of him, and how little attention he pays to the carnival; in fact, his prudence and solidity are astonishing. He takes his meals at La Poirier's without any ceremony, or great variety. I wish he would sometimes visit madame de Coulanges, who is alone; she would be delighted with him. But what say you to this company, for

* A milliner of Paris.

† A favourite expression of madame Reinié.

which you cannot find a purchaser? is it possible that so advantageous a bargain should not be eagerly caught at? this plainly shows the failure of money. How is it then that you manage for your son's equipage? what an increase of expense, and in what a time of scarcity! this exceeds imagination. I have told you all my thoughts upon this subject. I suppose the marquis will be able to pay you a visit; the king's journey to Compiegne is only to review his household. I know that the strongest proof that can be given of discontinuing a pension is, not to pay it; but I asked whether this was a general evil; for you know it is not pleasant to be singular in misfortune. If the roads are as bad in your country as they are here, I pity M. de la Garde; all intercourse is nearly interrupted in this province.

But, my dear countess, how is your health? I left you indulging in bed, playing the fine lady, wishing to be nursed in your turn; this is all you will tell me; these colics are however very painful things, they are real disorders: you are ill *all over*, like madame Reinié. Paulina is very facetious in making that verse of the *Miserere* a subject of melancholy; it is indeed a shocking thing to say *her mother conceived her in sin:* this deserves consideration, and leads to consequences. I find her little imagination has soon made comparisons that are very just. We have each our different portions and species of wit: if we ourselves were to compose the dose, we should infuse some of every kind; but we must be resigned to this, as to every thing else. I find the marquis has a good assortment, and particularly of the solid and permanent. As for you, my dear love, who have received some from so many various quarters, you would, in conscience, be obliged to communicate it, if it depended upon yourself: but why is not a traffic allowable in this respect? superfluities on one side, might

be exchanged for deficiencies on another, and this would make all perfect; it is a pity that this is not the fashion, and that God did not think proper to fix it so. M. de Grignan would find a great sale for his spirit of justice and harmony; it is certain that he has endeavoured to set us at variance; what he said of you was so probable, that I really thought it true.

But here is a subject of contention much more serious: you say that I have read the same romances three times over; this is very insulting; these are old sins that ought to be pardoned, in consideration of the advantage I derive from being able also to read the finest works in the world, such as Abbadie's, Pascal's, Nicole's, Arnauld's, and the best histories, &c. as often. This quality does more good than harm, as it does honour to books of merit, and is so proper to pass some of the periods of life agreeably. In short, my child, it is a quality I wish you possessed; but let us embrace, why should we burthen ourselves with a quarrel that must necessarily end at Easter? Let us do it now with a good grace. I ask Paulina, how she has passed her carnival, for she is at an age to enjoy it. We have had some very rational and agreeable visitors: they played incessantly, and I was left entirely at liberty. But last night, without having observed any preparation, my daughter-in-law retired an instant before supper, and immediately the servant who sets out the table entered disguised very prettily, and told us supper was ready. We went into the supper-room, which was illuminated, and found my daughter-in-law in complete masquerade in the midst of hers and our servants, who were also in masquerade; those who held the basins, those who handed the napkins, all the officers, and all the lackeys, were masked, forming a group of upwards of thirty persons, most whimsically dressed. Our surprise

was very great; and the mirth and laughter which this whim occasioned, lasted all supper-time; for we knew not who waited upon us. After supper, music being provided, they all danced passepieds, minuets, courants, and country-dances. At length twelve struck, and Lent began. Do you recollect, my love, the Shrove Tuesdays we have passed together, and where we slept so early in Lent? I am always delighted to find you in every period of my life, and always with the truest affection. Adieu; we all love you here, and I love and honour all there.

LETTER DCCCCLXXVI.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, February 12, 1690.

I WISH, my dear countess, that you had read over your last letter, and that it could have struck you as it struck us: Paulina's follies would have diverted you a second time; you recount them so humorously, that they lose nothing in the narration. We see a little imagination that catches fire, and sparkles at every thing, and which, with the graces of her pretty person, never mistakes its object. My son is in love with her; he has so favourable an idea of her, that, in his opinion, she surpasses the greatest beauty: he wants to see her, and to have her picture; and from the place where you speak of the carnival, which she feels in the marrow of her bones, he began as you know how, and, reading and laughing by turns, he at length got to the end. Do you recollect when your brother read the comedy between your son and de Sanzei? no one could help laughing that saw him. He entered, then, into this pretty scene, as well as his wife and myself, and we felt the effects of the

striking passages; blowing the touch-pan; the sword being left by accident at the garrison; the young officer who was at the battle of Rocroi, where he distinguished himself so agreeably by killing the trumpeter who had waked the prince too early in the morning; madame D****, her picture, M. de Grignan: confess, my child, that these various subjects, brought into play by Paulina's vivacity, must necessarily produce a very humorous effect. She makes you keep the carnival whether you will or not. We have great confidence in M. de Grignan's taste; his laugh cannot fail of calling forth the risibility of the most reserved; the suspension of the chevalier's gout, and his thinking midnight the best hour in the day, with your laughing till you are ill, are indeed strong proofs in favour of Paulina.

FROM M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

And what can I say after this, my little sister? it is precisely what I should have said myself. I laughed till I cried at this picture, which you gave us with so much fancy and vivacity. The gaiety which consists in being disposed to any thing, eating pudding instead of beef, and dancing figures we have never seen, is so much suited to Paulina's age, that it is evident she acts her part naturally: but as my mother has told you all I thought upon the different scenes represented by this dear child, and as I should only sully what she says so brilliantly, I shall urge to you very strenuously what she has only slightly touched upon; this is, that we conjure you in the most serious manner possible, as does also your sister-in-law, to send us Paulina's picture as soon as you can. Painters returning from Rome frequently pass your way; there may be some good ones at Aix: in short, we request this favour of you most

affectionately and urgently. Any one that can discompose the serious brow of M. de Grignan to the degree you represent, and who suspends the torture of the unfortunate *Sisyphus*, appears to me something more than mortal. But whilst this captain, at one time a youth, and at another a veteran officer, was boasting of his prowess and good fortune, what said M. de la Garde? was he not diverted like the rest? You cannot imagine how much we are fascinated with Paulina's charms; let us hear of her constantly; she was so young when I saw her, that I have indeed occasion to be informed what she is at present; is there no one of your acquaintance who can give me some idea of her? In short, my beautiful little sister, assist us, in this respect, as much as you can.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

You see I have not exaggerated my son's infatuation: he tells it you himself. I also am somewhat curious to know where M. de la Garde was: was he in bed? had he any scruples at seeing this representation? he is, however, the foremost of Paulina's admirers. As to the portrait which my son requests so earnestly, I advise you to do nothing rashly; it will be time enough when you go to Paris or Aix: the size must be the same as yours by Ferdinand; it would be a companion to that of madame de Henrichemont. I find the poor marquis is burthened with all the affairs of the house: I should fear they were too much for him, without the assistance of Vaille, who knows every body, and who will relieve and conduct him to the ministers; he may also be of service to him in the disposal of his company; such a man is of real service. As you say, my child, every thing now depends upon a head of eighteen, whilst all

the rest, which are pretty numerous, are for various reasons incapable of acting. It is the will of God that it should be so. It will be a melancholy thing, if the marquis cannot go to Grignan, and there drink at the fountain-head of good counsel, which he must necessarily require. I am very attentive to the sequel, and the answer you will have from court: I do not know whether I remember right, but I think the proposal was not relished. What! does M. d'Aiguebonne wish for another defeat? it would be the height of glory for the marquis to give him this death-stroke; in which case the good Rochon must assist Vaille: but I do not think M. de Lamoignon will make you take this step; he will advise you to get letters of state, till you come yourself to complete what you have so well begun; this is my opinion. At all events, inform me truly of your intentions; they are of the highest importance to me.

I scold you for being uneasy, when my letters do not come exactly to an hour; why should you believe I am ill, rather than that the rivers have overflowed their banks? All the inhabitants of the hotel de Rochefoucault are driven away by the water, after having been banished by fire; all the lower story is a pond. The water runs in our street as far as M. le Jai's; so that you have greater reason to be astonished when the couriers do arrive. But really all that you say to me is so kind, so affectionate, so natural, there is such an air of truth in it, so affecting to my heart, that, after having corrected you for your uneasiness, I am compelled to own to you, that I find real pleasure in it. I know not why you refuse to avail yourself of the proposal respecting Bourbilly *; I am aware of your delicacy;

* Of borrowing by mortgage upon that estate.

but so far from seeing any thing fatal in it, or that can make you think of the future, it would give me real satisfaction, by making me enjoy, during my life, the convenience you may derive from it; and the more so, as by my reserving the reversion, which these bad times render necessary, I do not see why, upon such an emergency, you may not make use of this expedient, particularly as you have the good Berbisi for a correspondent. Adieu, my dear; I am convinced that no one can love like you, except myself; but maternal affection is so natural, and filial affection so extraordinary, that whilst I am doing only my duty, you are a prodigy. I believe, however, that there is a dose of tenderness in my heart, which operates in your favour, and which other mothers do not feel; this made me say, some time ago, that I loved you with an affection formed on purpose for you.

Marshal d'Estrées is going away for two months; he will see his brother the cardinal, he will marry all his children, our Bretons say: in short, we shall be without a governor. I am like M. de Grignan, I wish M. de Chaulnes would inform you of a little more than trifles; there are many degrees between seeking you by land and by water, and the secrets of an ambassador. I should scold Coulanges for quitting this good duke; and yet, if his journey were so long, he might very excusably be guilty of this incivility.

LETTER DCCCCLXXVII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 15, 1690.

It would seem *, my dear love, as if nothing was thought of but attachment to you, and pleasing you; and yet it is very certain that the intention was to please others: there is nothing so easy as to deceive those who do not observe us. It must be owned that we have great cause to blush, when, having showed signs of repentance from thinking death at hand, we recover not only to life, but to all the passions that were supposed to be extinct. This certainly is very embarrassing, and would make us tremble for every dying person, since nothing but the recovery of their health can show the sincerity of their repentance: but God knows their hearts, and that is sufficient. We are frequently obliged to recur to this centre of all things: are you not, my child, plunged into the midst of impossibilities, which every where surround you? I really admire you, but I will not allow you to compare your anxiety to mine: I ought to forget my own situation entirely, to think of nothing but what concerns you; and this I do. All your affairs are pressing and urgent; every thing is forced, essential, and exposed to public

* All the first part of this Letter refers to particulars of the situation and society of madame de Grignan, too intimate to be understood. But, obscure as it appears, it shows the entire confidence the daughter had in the mother, which was greater than could be supposed even from the letters of madame de Sévigné; for it is evident that madame de Sévigné designedly, and in concert with her daughter, avoided replying to certain subjects. This confidence is honourable to them both, and it particularly restores to the character of madame de Grignan the good opinion that many persons withhold from her.

observation; and I should not think you more to be pitied, if you were commanded, upon the spot, to create something out of nothing. This is what oppresses my heart, and occupies all my thoughts; I think not of myself; my troubles are nothing; I am not compelled to any thing: my affairs are somewhat in disorder, but a short absence will bring all things right; a comfortable, agreeable, convenient retreat, equally serviceable to my salvation as to my affairs, if I know how to avail myself of it, and which fortunately happens when you are in Provence: you must acknowledge, therefore, my best child, that I ought to feel no evils but those you endure. Correct your ideas, then; think of me, only to love me; I have long been overpaid by your sincere friendship, and extreme gratitude.

I conjure you to give me the sequel of the romance, in which I find Paulina acts a good part, as she is upon terms with the princess her mother, and sleeps in her apartment. It was a fine circumstance in her travels through France, to forget Italy; we request that the first time she goes to Rome, she will not forget to take Paris in her way.

Beaulieu informs me that the company is sold; and the marquis writes me a little letter full of affection; he seems to me quite overwhelmed with business, and so am I, in constantly regretting the absence of his uncle, who is not even in Paris at a time when he would be of so much service to him. It would be very unfortunate if the marquis could not visit you in Provence. You have seen by madame de la Fayette's letters that poor M. de Montausier, after having been ruined both *body* and *mind*, inclines at present to yield all the *mental* part, and retain only the *corporeal**; this seems to me

* M. de Montausier died on the 17th of May following, at the age of eighty.

prettily expressed. Alas! this fall of our poor abbé may justly be called being reduced to a mere *body*.

The praises you bestow upon my letters, are so superior to their merit, that if I were not convinced that you would never unfold or read them again, I should be terrified at the thoughts of seeing myself betrayed into print by one of my friends. Voiture and Nicole! good heavens, what names! and then what expressions you use, my dear child!

Corbinelli, whom I have not informed of your wickedness, will write to you by the marquis; he is going to dine with him at madame de Coulanges's; he is satisfied with his understanding. M. du Bois tells me he has sent you his book.

But listen to a miracle: marshal de la Ferté's lady * is so truly converted, that it is impossible to be more sincere; she is in the hands of good workmen, she finds nothing too warm. Ninon has been astonished, shaken; the Holy Spirit blows wherever it listeth: but how abundantly it shed its influence upon the first four ages of the rising church! what a number of martyrs! the history of your bishop de Grasse is excellent. What popes there were at that time! all martyrs. What bishops! where shall we meet with their likeness now?

It is reported that count d'Estrées is to marry mademoiselle de Croissi; and mademoiselle d'Estrées, M. de Torci †; this is a fine medley: it is, I believe, upon this

* It is not the scandalous chronicle of Bussy only, that sets forth the character of madame de la Ferté, the worthy sister of the famous countess d'Olonne; the original letters of Madame prove that this satire has not overcharged the portrait. It must be owned that madame de Sévigné was not just in placing Ninon by the side of such a woman; Ninon, who not only never dishonoured or deceived a husband, but who even remained constant to her lover; she was too well skilled in voluptuousness to degenerate into licentiousness.

† These two marriages did not take place.

account that the marshal (d'Estrées) is gone. You will have the cardinal, his brother, in your province, but you will not see him. It is delightful weather, all the birds are in full chorus; I walk, and read your letters with extreme affection; I should be very sorry if I could not enjoy them a second time.

LETTER DCCCCLXXVIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, February 19, 1690.

If you could see me, my dear child, you would order me to keep Lent, and, finding that I had no ailments, you would be convinced, as I am, that God had bestowed so good a state of health upon me only to make me obey the commands of the church. We live well here; we have not, indeed, the river Sorgue *; but we have the sea, so that we are in no want of fish. We have butter every week from Prévalaie: I like it, and eat it as if I were a native of Britany. We eat bread and butter often, and we always think of you when we do so; my son marks all his teeth upon it, and what pleases me most is, that I can leave the marks of all mine too: we shall soon strew the slices with fine herbs and violets: at night we have pottage with a little butter, according to the custom of the country, good prunes and fine spinach: in short, this is not fasting, and we say, with confusion, *it is very difficult to serve the holy church!* But why do you find fault with milk in my coffee? It is because you dislike milk; for you would otherwise think it the most charming thing in the world. I drink it on Sunday mornings from choice; you think

* The river Sorgue abounds in fish, and waters the county of Venaissin.

to carry it in saying it is good to make a poor consumptive being just breathe: really, this is a high encomium, and if it makes a dying person breathe, it will make a healthy person live very agreeably. Here ends the chapter on Lent.

But a word of sermons; how I pity you for being sometimes obliged to listen to such long insipid discourses! This patience M. Nicole could never inspire me with, though he has written so good a treatise upon the subject. When I am as good as M. de la Garde, if ever God grants me this grace, I shall like all sermons; in the mean while, I content myself with the Gospels as explained by M. le Tourneux; these are real sermons, and nothing but the vanity of man could load modern discourses with their present contents. We sometimes read the Homilies of St. John Chrysostom; these are divine, and please us so highly, that I persist in not going to Rennes till passion week, to avoid being exposed to the eloquence of the preachers who hold forth in behalf of the parliament. I recollect the rigid fast you formerly observed on Shrove-Tuesday, living solely upon self-love, with which you seasoned every sauce, except that which might have nourished you; but even in this your vanity was deceived, for your face was covered with pimples from the heat of your blood; you contemplated your own essence, like a pigeon in a pie; what a ridiculous whim! This was your reply to La Mousse, who said to you, "Mademoiselle, all these charms will decay." "Yes, sir, but they are not decayed yet." Good heavens, who could suppose that such a person could neglect herself as you have done, and become so clever and excellent a woman! We want now to give you some vanity, some regard for yourself: in this you are very deficient, while you possess too much for others. An equipage, horses, mules,

subsistence; in short, to live only from hand to mouth, and yet make such a considerable expense, without knowing where to find the sinews of war; this, my child, can be done by no one but you: but I conjure you to think of Bourbilly; here, perhaps, you may find some relief, after having in vain hoped for it elsewhere.

Madame de Chaulnes tells me, that the marquis is a fine fellow, that he is coming to see her: she does not think he will have time to go to Provence. I believe the company is sold; I knew it before you. It is true, that your son is a stout lad, but he is not so dark as Boufflers; I cannot bear the comparison, unless it be to run like him the race of good fortune. The marquis should give you a more circumstantial account of his first journey to Versailles; it is this we want to know, and whether the king took any notice of him, or spoke to him: it is upon such an occasion that a father or an uncle would have been of infinite service. I enclose my little note from the abbé Bigorré: it pleases us, for his intelligence is more accurate than that of others. If the women and courtiers, who think M. de Chaulnes is a long while bringing about this pacification, were informed of all that has been done these eighteen years against Rome, they would be of opinion, that if the ambassador succeed at last, it must be a master-piece of address and good fortune. There are fifteen or sixteen chiefs, which our leisure has made us acquainted with, and which are nearly of as much weight as those who occasioned the suppression of the children of madame de Mondonville*. M. de Grignan knows this; but you have not time to discuss these trifles; it is more expeditious to censure, judge, and be impatient. Car-

* She founded the establishment of female children, suppressed in 1686.

dinal d'Estrées is arrived. I know not whether he will think proper to declare himself the ambassador's antagonist; we shall see. He passed through Paris in his way to Versailles, and sent a gentleman to madame de la Fayette; he is much her friend. The verses of our Adhémar are very pretty; those upon play are indifferent, but good, as you say, for *bouts rimés*. I send you some of La Scuderi's for Coulanges; what think you of them? They are said to be the last she will write, as she is going gradually with M. de Montausier †. It is proper to think of this journey, my dear child, after having lived so long; nothing prepares us so well for it as reading, and seeing an infinite number of persons, younger than ourselves, go first; in short, it is the common destiny. But B****'s fate is whimsical, to be ruined by dint of usury! The fall of our poor d'Harouis is much easier to comprehend; his passion was to please every body, without bounds, and without reason; for it eclipsed every other passion, and even justice: this is another prodigy, but it is dying by a nobler sword. You know M. du Bois's work, and your taste is exquisite. It confirms most fully the truth of our religion; I think it admirable. I have not yet got to the *Mœurs de l'Eglise* ‡: I will not thank M. du Bois, he is too happy in obtaining your approbation; but I will thank M. de Grignan for his goodness in remaining with you and his delightful family. For my part, I am always with you, as I have told you; and you constantly engage my thoughts in these woods, where the sun shines as in Provence, and where I read your letters over and over again, with so much pleasure.

† Madame de Scuderi did not die till 1701; her age was ninety-four.
‡ Manners of the Church.

LETTER DCCCCLXXIX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Wednesday, February 22, 1690.

THE letter you wrote to the abbé Charier is a masterpiece of its kind; it was really a difficult task for you, unacquainted as you were with the subject; but you have made so good a use of the abbé de Kimperle, madame de Sévigné, M. Charier's son, and madame de Grignan, that there is not a single word without its weight, or that is not necessary. I am convinced that you did not feel all the excellence of this note, it escaped you: but I restore it to the honour that is due to it, and am delighted with it; it could not come more opportunely to assist me in thanking the abbé, for having concluded a very important affair for me in Lower Britany; I think I have acquitted myself in sending him your charming letter.

To come to you, my dear child; you say nothing of *the first minister*; this affair, however, must necessarily be attended with consequences. How have you contrived about your son's equipage? I am beforehand with you in the intelligence of his company being sold. I do not think he will have time to pay you a visit; this grieves me, as well on your account as on his. I am told he is a stout lad, and that his father's figure must not be expected: I hear, at the same time, much good of him; he is polite and discreet; but it is a misfortune upon his first appearance at court, that the little colonel was not supported by any of his relations; for my part, considering how much he had upon his hands, I think he has acquitted himself admirably.

M. de Chaulnes has written a long and friendly letter

to me from Rome, and complains that I abandon him in his solitude: I tell him, it is because I have not time to write, that I am overwhelmed with business, and so on. You will find by Bigorré's little note, that we have reason to hope those long and difficult negociations will, at length, be crowned with success, and that what might be considered impossible to an ambassador less accustomed than M. de Chaulnes to the manners of Rome, will infallibly be effected. You will, at least, find that the king is satisfied with his ambassador, and pays him well. Cardinal d'Estrées has seen madame de la Fayette, who is returned from Turin: this furnishes matter for much conversation; but I believe Rome will not be forgotten: it is said that his eminence speaks of the pope, but does not mention the ambassador, which appears to me as difficult as playing at the game in which you must not say *yes* nor *no*.

Is it true that M. du Plessis is returned to Paris? You have not told me what made you change your opinion respecting him; I understood that you were satisfied with him. The solicitude and care you express for your mamma, is kind indeed: I am still in good health; the abstinence of Lent is salutary; send us some of your fine Lisle trouts, and we will send you some butter that will delight your heart. A thousand friendly regards to M. de Grignan: I flatter myself that if he were here, he would be tempted to walk through all the different alleys, which would amuse him. Adieu, my beloved child, I cannot tell you how much I love you, nor how necessary your affection is to the happiness of my life.

LETTER DCCCCLXXX.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, Sunday, February 26, 1690.

I COULD not have believed that I should have wept so much for La Chau; but it is impossible to read your account of his poor wife's unfeigned and violent affliction, without being affected to tears. This is, indeed, a peculiar misfortune, and a fate which nothing could prevent. The man is in haste, he wants to get to his journey's end: he is advised, for very weighty reasons, not to expose himself, or, at least, not to go into the little boat; but he will listen to no one, he must go, he must be punctual to his appointment; Death is waiting for him at a particular spot upon the Rhone; he must meet him there, and perish. Good heavens, my dear child, how all this is arranged! Every one sees his own fate in this accident, and his wife's grief becomes ours: as we are exposed to similar perils, it is our own interest that makes us weep, when we suppose we are lamenting the misfortunes of others. Christianity dictates to us that we should think first of this poor man's salvation; but his wife afterwards claims our pity for the loss of 1000 livres: if the dead body should not float, or the violence of the Rhone should throw it beyond Arles upon some unfrequented shore, Providence will dispose of this gold, sewed up in his wet coat, as of the rest.

I highly approve the resolution of not sending for the marquis, this is the surest way: the journey would be both expensive and fatiguing, and productive of no good but the mere gratification of your affection: bear this like many other things, and rather wait till he is a brigadier or major-general, than make him lose his

time now. Beaulieu informs me, that he is quite overwhelmed with business, and that he attends to nothing else. Is it possible, that he should have visited madame de la Fayette before madame de Vins? I blame him; I am as jealous upon this occasion as you are, for I frequently put myself in your place; every reason should have induced him to have flown to madame de Vins; she wrote to me the other day that she longed to see him, and to observe the difference and transition from infancy to youth. He has waited upon madame de Lavardin, and will have time to pay her another visit.

M. de Grignan has resolved upon a very precipitate journey; it is difficult to avoid such courses, when we command singly in a province, whether for the service of the king, or the honour of the post. You never examine thoroughly into this business, except for M. de Grignan; this is natural enough: but the example should extend farther. A word of cardinal de Forbin*: the courier who brought the news of his promotion was only seven days upon the road. M. de Beauvais was transported with joy. The king is perfectly satisfied with his ambassador; it is very probable that he will perform all the miracles that are to be wrought at Rome. Madame de Chaulnes writes to me in a style of triumph; she is in high spirits, and not without reason. We must, however, write to the new cardinal; I have just been doing so, and I am sure you will not fail to do the same. *No enemies*, my dear child; let this be your maxim, it is equally Christian and politic: I not only say *no enemies*, but also *many friends;* you have felt the good effects of these in your law-suit; you have a son; you may stand in need of those who you may now

* Toussaint de Forbin de Janson, bishop of Beauvais, was included in the promotion of eleven cardinals made by Alexander VIII. in the beginning of February 1690.

think can never be of service to you. We are deceived; see how madame de la Fayette abounds with friends on every side, and of all ranks. She has a hundred arms, and they all serve her; her children feel it, and thank her daily for her courteous disposition; an obligation which she owes to M. de la Rochefoucault, and of which her family reaps the benefit. I am certain that you have been of this opinion for many years.

You explain madame Reinié's conduct very well; it is droll to think of her leaving Paris, her husband, all her business, to fly for three or four months *all over* Provence asking for money, without getting any, fatiguing herself, returning, after being at great expense, and getting the rheumatism into the bargain! for recollect that she has pains *all over* her; and such as at length have defeated you.

I am delighted at Paulina's partiality to M. Nicole; it is a proof that she reads him with attention; this taste gives me the highest opinion of her understanding; I also like her anger, that the bishops do not fight for promotion. But, my dear, on your honour do you believe it right, to give us only the first volume of the romance of the *princess*, the *infanta*, or the *first minister*, so charming as we thought it*? I will not allow you to stop here; I insist upon knowing what is become of the princess's good and just resolution? I am afraid it has vanished, by the necessity of the times, the want of a *minister*, the sudden journey, the impossibility of collecting *the leaves of the Sibyl*, idly and incautiously scattered to the winds for ten years. In short, I fear your good intentions will come to nothing, as I have so often found during the last twenty years: this story,

* This was an account, in the form of a romance, of what passed in M. de Grignan's family.

however, requires a continuation, but it should not be too serious with regard to your affairs. I wish also to be informed of the success of M. Prat's journey to the enraged lover of the princess *Trucile*. I should like to know who were the confidants of the *first minister* and *the favourite;* and who received the couriers. Tell me if you are still satisfied with *Flame**; he is a very considerable personage in your household. I want to know some particulars respecting the count's journey, and if the treasurer will do as he wishes: here are a number of questions, my dearest child, for which I apologise. It is kind of you to love my letters; when you receive three at a time, you say you are rich; but what fatigues do they not occasion you! They are so very long, that you should not answer them minutely. Adieu, my love; how does Lent agree with you? for my part, I like it extremely. I took a mess of milk-coffee this morning: I am not yet surfeited with it, nor with sermons, for we read none but those of M. le Tourneux and St. John Chrysostom. It is delightful weather, the winter is past, and we have a prospect of spring that is superior to spring itself.

[*N. B. This Letter is the last from the mother to the daughter. But as madame de Grignan did not leave Britany for Provence till eight months afterwards, she must have written a great many more during this period, which however have not come to light. Perhaps they will some day be found, unless the same motive which prevented madame de Simiane from adding them to the rest, should have caused them to be destroyed.*]

* M. de Grignan's house-steward.

LETTER *DCCCCLXXXI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

The Rocks, March 18, 1690.

I DISPATCH this sheet, after three others which I wrote to you three days ago, to tell you, my dear cousin, that I am very imperfect; which is a truth I wish to establish at Rome as well as at Paris. I have read your charming letter several times; the last when walking in these woods, whose silence gave an additional zest to your verse, your prose, your serious and your playful style. I reflected on the mode of life you are leading at Rome, blended with profaneness and *santissimo* (holiness); and on the beautiful gardens, where art and nature display their different wonders. I thought of the bowling-green, into which you climbed with the agility of twenty; of the advantage men possess over women, whose every step is measured and bounded; and of the number of days and years I might walk in the ground-floor of our groves, without once finding myself in this bowling-green. I think madame de Scuderi's madrigal very pretty and very flattering; and I also think you fortunate in having the abbé de Polignac in your society. I am pleased at his remembrance; he is one of the most agreeable men I know: he is acquainted with every thing; talks on every subject; has all the good-humour, sprightliness, and courtesy, that are desirable in the intercourse of the world. I believe I formerly expressed myself to you in the same way of him, when we were in treaty together respecting the marriage of his brother with mademoiselle de Grignan. Returned from my walk, I wrote to you, intending to talk of him, and I forgot it; what say

you to this vile omission, my poor Coulanges? We must no longer trust to any thing, and less to ourselves than to others: from that day, I have scolded myself, treated myself with coldness, and refused to walk with myself alone: I consider myself unworthy of my own confidence; and the only comfort I can find, is in desiring you to reconcile me to myself, by telling the worthy abbé in what way I forget him, and in what way I remember him. This is what I had to say to you; advising you to make him your friend rather than your rival, and to love me always as much as I love you, if you can.

LETTER *DCCCCLXXXII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, June 22, 1690.

I HAVE received two letters from you, my dear cousin, a long one from Paris, and a short one from Versailles. I should have answered the first, if I had known where to direct to you. I begin by approving highly the change in my niece's name. There are many examples of this kind; but if there were not, I should like her to be the first to set one. All your reasons are excellent. Let us then be countess de Dalets†; it is a noble and good name: my niece is very fortunate in having so beautiful a choice. If I had any thing to wish in this instance, it would be, that, for the facility of pronunciation, you would permit me to drop the article, as did my old friend the countess de Dalets, of the family

† The name of one of M. de Bussy's estates, which madame de Coligny at that time assumed, apparently wishing to avoid taking the name of her second husband, M. de la Riviere, and keeping that of her first, which was besides only the name of an estate.

of Estin, and instead of saying strictly the countess de Dalets, you would be content with the countess Dalets.

My dear niece, if I can obtain this favour, no one will support more zealously the justice of the change. To speak seriously, it is the best thing possible; but you will do well to call your son count de Langhac, when he makes his entry into the world, because it is the name of his family. When we are of high birth, we must alter nothing, and take no new name without absolute necessity. You must, I think, have great pleasure and full employment in the education of this dear child. He must now be a great boy; and if you and your father have not given him wit, you will have to render an account at the tribunal of wits.

I return to you, my dear cousin; I am apt to wander. I am not surprised that the king has received graciously the offer of your services: he knows well the hearts of Frenchmen, and has no reason to doubt yours; but there is no place for you, except the one Providence has assigned you. I am delighted that you have adopted the excellent maxim of submitting to his will: but for this, the unfortunate would be frantic, and must be chained; but with submission, we are respectable in this world, and have a right to expect solid happiness in the other. Thus, my dear cousin, we are gainers; and I am so struck with the necessity of this doctrine, that I love you the better for your sentiments. I wish however that you had obtained what you desired. I make no reply to the news you told me a fortnight ago; it is useless and ridiculous to reason at a distance; the state of public affairs changes daily.

My daughter is in Provence with her husband. Her son is at the lion's mouth, like yours: he is at the head of the Grignan regiment. He would have been

satisfied with this place ten years hence; judge then of the delight of having it at the age of seventeen. I am very tranquil in this solitude, where I have had the honour and the pleasure of seeing M. T**** †. These are pleasant periods of life. There are many beauties here now, which did not exist then; and there were some then, which are lost now. I agree with you in what you say of him. I find him, both with regard to the past and the present, as you find him. I am glad that he remembers me with pleasure; I do the same by him. You are fortunate in having such excellent society; mine does not displease me. My son has good sense and a cultivated understanding, which rouses mine. So has his wife, and particularly so great a share of intelligence, that it surprises us, and makes us suppose she has passed her life at court, though she has never been out of this province. Judge if I can be better off. I calculate, however, upon being at Paris this winter; and upon loving you always, my dear cousin, for many reasons. This is one: MARIE DE RABUTIN.

LETTER * DCCCCLXXXIII.

TO THE SAME.

The Rocks, July 29, 1690.

I WISH to write to you, my dear cousin, upon the battle gained by M. de Luxembourg‡: it is a very natural

† This must be either M. de Toulongeon or M. de Tilladeau, the friend and neighbour of Bussy, of whom there are several letters in the Collection of the latter.

‡ The battle of Fleurus, near Charleroi, where the French defeated the Dutch army. Out of seven thousand prisoners, there were nine hundred officers. They took besides two hundred pairs of colours, &c.

subject. Do you not find that God always takes the part of the king; and that nothing can give greater lustre to the fame of his arms, nor come more opportunely, than this victory? Such great news always occasions great anxiety to those who are interested, or who fear they are so. The little Grignan, who was in M. de Bouffler's corps, may have been one of those who were detached to join M. de Luxembourg. I am also interested in two or three young persons. Till I have discovered what is become of them, my heart will beat a little, and then I have a general pity for all who have perished in this battle. I have been grieved for Villarceaux: there are some terrible circumstances attending his death. I also pity the poor mothers, madame de Saucour and madame de Cauvisson. The young widows I do not pity so much; they will either be their own mistresses, or change their masters. I share in the king's honour, and in the good effects of this intelligence spread over all Europe, which we shall feel in more places than one. I am the friend and servant of M. de Luxembourg and his sister*, to whom I have just written. In short, my dear cousin, you see by what I have said, that I have not wanted employment for these four or five days; and, indeed, these emotions are occasionally necessary in the country; we should otherwise easily forget that we have a soul. The quiet we here enjoy, is akin to lethargy. Thank God, I am thoroughly revived, and never did Hungary-water produce a greater effect.

whole of the artillery and all the baggage. Notwithstanding this defeat, the prince of Orange appeared again three months afterwards with an equally strong army.

* The duchess de Meckelbourg, formerly the beautiful Châtillon, whose charms and favours had rendered more than one hero happy and guilty.

Tell me if your son was at this battle. He was in the number of the young men for whom I was interested. God has not conducted you, my dear cousin, through the most agreeable paths of life. They will be, however, more safe; and, after all, life is a short journey. If we were wise, we should have but one concern in the world, that of our salvation. You have a perfect, excellent friend, whom I honour and respect highly, who would not contradict me in this truth. It is useless to name him: I defy you to confound the duke de Beauvilliers with the rest. I thank you, my dear niece, for your compliance. I thought we should not quarrel for a syllable more or less.

LETTER *DCCCCLXXXIV.

FROM THE COUNT DE BUSSY TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, July 31, 1690.

THE battle of Fleurus, my dear madam, is already forgotten; and do you know why? Because they talk of a victory gained by the king's fleet over the English and Dutch †. It is not so complete as the first, but neither has it cost so dear. Did you ever hear of so many and so long a train of prosperities, my dear cousin? and do you not think that to the attributes of Louis the Great, the Victorious, and the Well-served, we ought to add that of the Fortunate? The three or four young persons, in whom you are so much interested, were either not at Fleurus, or were not wounded. My son is at Mont-Royal, in a corps which the dauphin has withdrawn from thence, to place in his own

† By Tourville, in the Channel. According to Avrigny, the combined enemies lost six ships.

army. Every body pities the Villarceaux, father and son; and upon this subject we remark how much Providence sports with the conduct of men. Villarceaux, the father, refused the order of knighthood, that his son might have it, and by this proceeding gained general esteem; and it was the badge of this order which destroyed the son. He displayed it, to attract the respect and regard of those who had taken him. Disputing among themselves who should have a prisoner of such consequence, they killed him, because they could not agree. There are young widows, in consequence of this battle, with whom we ought to rejoice on the death of their husbands; and other ladies, with whom we ought to condole on the lives of theirs, who have escaped with slight wounds. The gods Hymen and Love have long been at variance. You say humorously, my dear cousin, that great news is sometimes necessary in the country. Certainly the scene there is too dull, and we should die if such events did not rouse us. With respect to what concerns myself, I have to tell you that I am leaving the court for Chaseu, very well pleased with the treatment I have received from the king, and with my hopes. You will laugh at me, perhaps, my dear cousin, when you hear that at my time of life I am in good spirits, and calculate upon promises. Upon this subject, I could tell you that if I wished to be angry I need not go far in search of reasons; but I am determined to be pleased, as I have already told you: these feelings will contribute to my health and happiness. The friend whom you honour and revere so much, approves them highly; and, being in good health himself, pursues the road to heaven by a contrary direction to mine: for he is loaded with favours and prosperities. In truth, no one is more deserving of them.

LETTER *DCCCCLXXXV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

The Rocks, August 13, 1690.

I RECEIVED a letter from you, my dear cousin, when you were setting out from Paris, which was a sort of adieu. Through your courage, great as it is, and the good-humour which so soon dissipates melancholy, I thought I could perceive that, from not having obtained what you asked for at court, there was a slight degree of mortification in the bottom of your heart. This was all that was necessary to give me a greater share than yourself; for I have not so much strength of mind as you. I think that in a conversation we should have made remarks which distance precludes.

I have just received letters from Paris, in which I am told that the prince of Orange is not dead †, and that it is only M. de Schomberg. We should have been much more pleased at this death, if we had not been led to expect the other; which however is only reserved for another time. The armies of Flanders are so near, that it seems as if they had still a desire to fight: those of Germany look at one another, with the Rhine between them. We must commend all to the God of battles, who will, when he pleases, be the God of peace. It is always by looking up to him that I consult the future, and endeavour to conform my desires to his will.

† The death of the prince of Orange had been believed for a week at Paris, and the most indecent rejoicings took place in consequence, from an inveterate hatred, mixed with fanaticism; but not with fear, as many foreign authors wrote, and particularly refugees. The French, at that time spoiled by success, could not suppose that they had any thing to fear from a prince they had almost invariably beaten.

LETTER *DCCCCLXXXVI.

FROM MADAME DE LA FAYETTE TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 20, 1690.

You received my answer before I received your letter. You will see, by madame de Lavardin's letter and by mine, that we wish you to go to Provence, since you are not coming to Paris: this is the best thing you can do; the sun is more brilliant, you will have company, I mean independent of madame de Grignan, which is no trifling consideration; a large house; numerous servants; in short, it would be living to be there. I give great praise to your son for consenting to part with you for your own good: if I were in the humour for writing, I would compliment him upon it: set out as soon as you can; send us word what places you pass through, and at what time, nearly: you shall there find letters from us. I am tormented with vapours of the most painful and depressing kind; we must suffer, when it is the will of God.

I approve your journey to Provence with my whole heart; I tell you so without flattery, and the thought had even occurred to madame de Lavardin and to me, without having the most distant idea that it was your intention †.

† This is what madame de Sévigné called "the approbation of her doctors."

LETTER * DCCCCLXXXVII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Grignan, Friday, November 10, 1690.

WHERE do you think I am, sir? Did you not know I was in Britany? Our Corbinelli must have told you so. After having been there sixteen months with my son, I thought it would be very pleasant to spend the winter here with my daughter. This plan of a journey of a hundred and fifty leagues, at first appeared a castle in the air; but affection rendered it so easy, that, in fact, I executed it between the 3d and 24th of October, on which day I arrived at Robinet's gate, where I was received by madame de Grignan with open arms, and with so much joy, affection, and gratitude, that I thought I had not come soon enough, nor from a sufficiently great distance. After this, sir, tell me that friendship is not a fine thing! it makes me often think of you, and wish to see you here once more during my life. We shall be here the whole of this winter, and the next summer: if you do not find a moment to come and see us, I shall think you have forgotten me. You will not know this house again, it is so much improved; but you will find its owners still abounding with esteem for you; and me, sir, possessing a regard for you, capable of driving our *friend* to madness, and worthy of your paying us this visit.

LETTER * DCCCCLXXXVIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Grignan, November 13, 1690.

WHEN you see the date of this letter, my dear cousin, you will take me for a bird. I have passed courageously from Britany into Provence. If my daughter had been at Paris, I should have gone there: but knowing she would spend the winter in this beautiful country, I resolved to come and spend it with her, enjoy her fine sunshine, and return with her to Paris next year. I thought, after having given sixteen months to my son, that it was right to devote a few to my daughter; and this plan, which appeared difficult to execute, was attended with very little trouble. I was three weeks upon the road, and upon the Rhone. I even took a few days of rest; and, at length, I was received by M. de Grignan and my daughter with such cordial affection, such true joy and gratitude, that I thought I had not come far enough to see such excellent people; and found that the journey of a hundred and fifty leagues had not at all fatigued me. I will entertain you some day with an account of the grandeur of this house, and the beauty and magnificence of the furniture. I wished to inform you of my change of climate, that you might not write to me again at the Rocks, but here, where the mild heat of the sun makes me feel as if I should grow young again. We must not now neglect these little assistances, my dear cousin. I received your last letter before I left Britany; but I was so overwhelmed with business, that I deferred answering it till I came here. We heard, the other day,

of the death of M. de Seignelai †. How young! how rich! how well established! Nothing was wanting to his happiness: splendour itself seems dead in him. In short, my dear cousin, death makes us all equal; it is there the happy expect us. Death abates their joy, and thus comforts those who are not fortunate. A word of religion would not be amiss in this place; but I only wish to write a letter of friendship to my dear cousin, to ask how he does, and how his dear daughter is; to embrace them both with my whole heart; assure them of the esteem and respect of madame de Grignan and her husband, who desire me to do so; and conjure them still to love me: it is not worth while to change after so many years.

LETTER *DCCCCLXXXIX.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Lambesc, December 1, 1690.

Where are we, my amiable cousin? It is about a thousand years since I heard from you. I wrote to you last from the Rocks, by madame de Chaulnes; since then, not a single word from you. We must begin a new score, now that I am in your neighbourhood. What say you to my courage? nothing can exceed it. After having been sixteen months in Britany with my son, I thought I owed a visit also to my daughter, knowing she would not go to Paris this winter; and I was so well received by her and M. de Grignan, that if I felt any fatigue, I have entirely forgotten it, and am alive only

† He died of languor, at the age of thirty-nine. The French marine, which he had created, perished after him. Louvois died the following year; but the evils he had occasioned survived him.

to the joy and pleasure of finding myself with them. This plan was not disapproved by madame de Chaulnes, nor by madame de Lavardin and madame de la Fayette, whose advice I willingly ask, so that nothing has been wanting to the pleasure of this journey; you will give the finishing stroke to it, by returning by way of Grignan, where we shall expect you. The assembly of our little states is at an end; we are here alone, waiting till M. de Grignan is able to go to Grignan, and afterwards, if he can, to Paris. He was seized four or five days ago very violently with the colic, and a continual fever, of which he had two attacks a day: this disorder was gaining ground rapidly, but was stopped by the usual miracle of the jesuits' bark; but forget not that it has been as good for the colic as the fever; he must therefore recover. We shall only go to Aix for a moment, to see the little nun, and in a few days we shall be fixed for the winter at Grignan, where the little colonel (the marquis de Grignan), whose regiment is at Valence and the environs, will spend six weeks with us. Alas! this time will pass but too rapidly: I begin to sigh deeply at seeing it fly so swiftly, and I already perceive and feel the consequences. You, my young cousin, have not yet attained the period for making such melancholy reflections.

I wished to write to you on the death of M. de Seignelai: what an event! what a loss to his family and friends! I hear his widow is inconsolable, and that Sceaux is to be sold to the duke du Maine. Oh, heavens! how much might be said on such a subject! But what say you to his property falling to a man* who was supposed already established? Another subject of conversation: but we must now give only

* M. de Pontchartrain, afterwards chancellor of France in 1699.

the heads of the chapters preparatory to our meeting. The duke de Chaulnes has written us some very obliging letters, and gives us the hope of seeing him soon at Grignan; but before this, it seems to me that it would not be impossible to send the bulls so long expected, and sung too soon: who would have thought that the abbé de Polignac would not have brought them*? I never met with a child *so difficult to baptize;* but at length, you will have the honour of it: you deserve it after so much trouble; come then and receive our praise. I hardly dare mention your removal from Park Royal Street, to the Temple; I am grieved for you and for myself; I hate the Temple, as much as I love the goddess (madame de Coulanges) who at present demands homage there; I hate this part of the town, which leads only to Montfaucon; I even hate the beautiful view from it, of which madame de Coulanges speaks; I hate this false country, which makes her insensible to the beauties of the true, and feel more exposed to the rigours of the cold at Brévannes, than at her bedside in this vile Temple. In short, the whole displeases me; and the best of it is, that I have told her all these dislikes with a rudeness which I cannot but feel, and cannot prevent. What will you do, my poor cousin, so far from the hôtels de Chaulnes, de Lamoignon, du Lude, de Villeroi, and de Grignan? how can you leave such a neighbourhood? For my own part, I almost renounce the goddess, for how can I reconcile this remote corner of the world with my faubourg St. Germain†? Instead of finding this charming madame de Coulanges under my hand, as I used to do, taking coffee with her

* Every body was deceived in this; upon which madame de Cornuel said: "He does not bring *bulles* (bulls) but *préambules* (preambles)." They were in reality only preliminary articles.

† On account of madame de la Fayette, whom she often visited there.

in the morning, running to her house after mass, and returning there in the evening, as if it were to my own—in short, my poor cousin, name it not to me: I am happy in having a few months to accustom myself to this strange alteration; but was there no other house to be found? and your cabinet, what is become of that? shall we find all our pictures there? In short, it must have been the will of God, for how, without this idea, is it possible for me to be silent on the subject? I must put an end to it, and also to my letter.

I found Paulina a delightful girl, and exactly as you had described her to me. Tell me all your news; I write largely to you, for we like this style, which is that of friendship. I send you this letter by M. de Montmort, intendant at Marseilles, formerly M. du Fargis, who ate tartlets with my children: if you are acquainted with him, you must know him to be one of the best men in the world, the most polite, and the most obliging, loving to please and to circulate pleasure, in a manner peculiarly his own; in short, he knows more than any one upon this subject: I will make you subscribe to this, my dear cousin, at Grignan, where I shall expect you with true friendship and real impatience.

LETTER DCCCCXC.

FROM MADAME DE GRIGNAN TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, December 17, 1690.

Yes, we are together, loving and embracing each other with all our hearts; I, on my side, delighted to see my mother come heroically from one extremity of the universe to the other, and from the west to the east: no one but herself was capable of such an undertaking to be near her child, *like Niquée to see her lover.* And so

you approved her journey, my dear cousin? I thank you for it, and as a reward, I approve of your return. You write me word that you have a hope of obtaining your congé, and the duke de Chaulnes informs me that you are sure of it: empty hands have no charms, and I heartily wish he could bring back bulls in his; it seems to me to be as much your business as the duke's. The part you have taken in it by your celebrated song, engages you to come off honourably in this affair. Do not trouble yourself to bring a dog to Paulina: we do not choose to love any but rational creatures here; and from the sect* to which we belong, we do not choose to embarrass ourselves with this sort of machines, unless we could wind them up to cleanliness; without that, they are unbearable: you will be very well received, without the necessity of making presents to gain the heart of your future wife; it is very faithful to you, and nothing will prevent you from concluding the marriage, but the absence of the father, who is meditating a speedy departure, and who would have gone six weeks ago, but for a very serious indisposition. But, my dear cousin, do you sufficiently consider, that at your return you will no longer be near the hôtel de Chaulnes, that your pictures will be displaced, and that you will never be able to restore them to their former perfect order? I have really been grieved at the inconstancy of madame de Coulanges; you comfort me, however, by the prospect that she will procure you delightful society in the Temple: but, after all, neither cardinal de Bouillon, nor messieurs de Vendôme, are of much use in this large house, which is more calculated for their horses than for themselves: we must find our consolation then in the short time you will remain there, and consider that

* Madame de Grignan was a Cartesian.

after thirty-five years* you will return to Rome; you will still be young at the end of that period, if you go on as you do at present. I am very impatient to see all your poetry on Rome: bring me, if you can, the verses of the duke de Nevers; they are so sublime and so singular, that we cannot help blaming the care he takes to conceal them so cruelly. What! you are admitted into the sacred mysteries of this solitary abode! I admire you for having dared to attack the caprice of the husband, and the delicacy of the wife: I knew she was adorable, but not that she was so for you, nor that the praises you bestowed on her would convince her. This delightful society was necessary to you, to supply the place of that you have lost, in the prince de Turenne, and cardinal de Bouillon. A report prevails that the latter is not so happy at Paris as at Rome; his nephew and he were however well received. Were you not grieved for M. de Seignelai? Many fine reflections might be made upon his tragical fate: his cabinet, my dear cousin, is in greater disorder than yours. How much madame de Seignelai is to be pitied, and how many things she has lost to which she was attached, and from which she never supposed she could be separated! She is therefore, as we are informed, inconsolable. You cannot tell me by a letter, all you have thought upon this subject; the public says enough of it. Accept my compliments upon what I have just heard, that your nephew (the count de Sanzei) is appointed a captain of dragoons: I take a real interest in it; it is the way to be colonel; and when he has attained to this rank, he will be more at his ease. Adieu, my dear cousin, till we meet. I am making my rooms as warm as I can; but coming from Rome, every thing

* Madame de Coulanges had entered into a lease for thirty-five years.

will appear ice to you; even our conversation, if you have enjoyed that of M. and madame de Nevers in ever so slight a degree. I am very much yours, and I embrace you. Every one here says to you, *ora pro nobis* *. My mother writes to you.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

It is impossible to glean after my daughter; she has, in reality, said every thing that is to be said, and much better than I could have done. I can only say to you, that we are together, and that we shall receive you together; that I am delighted at having taken this journey, and that you, like the rest of the wise heads, approve it; that the manner in which I was received, and in which I am beloved, would have deserved that I should have come from a still greater distance. I told you all this, not ten days ago; I wrote also to our governor; I protested to him that he was the occasion of my journey, by his leaving Britany, and giving me the wish of coming to meet him, and of having this advantage over madame de Chaulnes, so that it was impossible for me to resist it. I told you also how much I detest your out of the way, remote, ill-placed Temple; the goddess will sing in vain, *Come, all, to my temple:* I shall not go often, though I shall constantly wish to do so. In short, my interest respecting this distant abode makes me so unjust, that I hate even the beautiful view from it, and the open country, that tells all secrets, and divulges all the charms of spring, as well as all the horrors of winter; you would not make me like this sham country in a thousand years, and I had almost as lief retire

* Allusion to what M. de Coulanges called his *litanies*, which was the enumeration he made in his letters of all the persons who were at Grignan.

before the end of the term to my estate at the Visitation†, as to live there thirty-five years. I have therefore only to tell you, my dear friend, that I have not received the letter you mention, in which cardinal de Bouillon and the abbé de Polignac had both written; I regret it extremely; I should at least have answered it immediately. I rejoice that Sanzei is made a captain; he will make his fortune; I hope so, and that you will always love me. I am never surprised at your being beloved, but I wonder at your good fortune in gaining the affection of M. and madame de Nevers; nothing can be better; every one in his way.

LETTER * DCCCCXCI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE SAME.

Grignan, April 10, 1691.

We have received a letter dated the 31st of March, from our dear ambassador: it came in less than a week: this expedition is delightful, but what he tells us is still more so; it is impossible to write in better spirits. My daughter takes upon herself to answer him, and as I desire her to send the Holy Ghost with all diligence, not only to create a pope‡, but to put a speedy termination to business, that he may be able to pay us a visit. She assures me, that she will send him word of the conquest of Nice, in five days after opening the trenches, by M. de Catinet, and that this intelligence will produce the same effect for our bulls. Tell us, my dear cousin,

† The place where she intended to be buried, if she died at Paris.

‡ Alexander VIII. had been dead for two months and a few days. Before he died, he distributed among his nephews all the money he possessed; which made Pasquin say, that it would have been better for the church to have been his niece than his daughter.

if we judge rightly. We have received M. de Nevers's epistle to the little Le Clerc of the academy: it is accompanied by one of your letters; they always give us great pleasure: the packet came very slowly, we know not why: there is neither rhyme nor reason in the conduct of the post. We think the epistle of M. de Nevers very pretty, and very entertaining; in short, all his productions have so peculiar and so excellent a character, that after them we can relish no others. The two last verses of the song he made for you, charmed my daughter as a Cartesian; speaking of the fine wines of Italy, he says:

Sur la membrane de leur sens
Font des sillons charmans*.

In short, it all deserves praise; for instance, can anything be more humorous, in his epistle, than the smallest human string wound up to the highest pitch; and the other extreme, of a hundred crotchets rolling in bass to the very depth of the abyss? This picture is complete; and the opera of which he speaks, is deservedly ridiculed: but we cannot comprehend why he has given his son's name to this epistle: *cui bono?* and where is the wit of it? for the style resembles his own, as much as one drop of water resembles another; it would be impossible to be deceived, and the subject can give offence to none: if you do not explain this to us, we shall be ill.

But let us talk of your grief at having lost this delightful family †, which has so well celebrated your merit in verse and prose, while you at the same time were so much alive to the charms of its society. It is easy to conceive the painfulness of this separation; M. de

* They make charming furrows upon the membrane of the senses.
† M. and madame de Nevers.

Chaulnes will not suffer us to believe that he shares it with you: an ambassador must be occupied only with the business of the king his master, who on his side has taken Mons, with a hundred thousand men, in a manner truly heroic, going every where, visiting every place, and indeed exposing himself too much. The policy of the prince of Orange, who was taking his measures very quietly with the confederate princes for the beginning of May, has found itself a little disconcerted by this promptitude: he threatens to come to the assistance of this great place; a prisoner told this to the king, who replied coolly, "We came here to wait for him." I defy your imagination to frame a more perfect and more precise answer. I therefore suppose, my dear cousin, that by sending you the news of this other conquest*, in four days, your Rome will not be sorry to live paternally with her elder son. God knows whether our ambassador will ably support *the identity of the greatest king in the world,* as M. de Nevers said.

Let us return to our own country. Our little marquis de Grignan went to the siege of Nice like an adventurer, *vago di fama* (eager for fame). M. de Catinet gave him the command of the cavalry for several days, that he might not be a volunteer; this did not prevent him

* The town of Mons surrendered to the king on the 10th of April, the day on which this letter is dated, after a siege of eighteen days. To Boileau is attributed the following impromptu, addressed to a lady who required him to write some verses upon the occasion:

Mons étoit, disoit-on, pucelle
Qu'un roi gardoit avec grand soin;
Louis-le-Grand en eut besoin,
Mons se rendit: vous auriez fait comme elle.

Mons was a virgin, it is said,
Kept by a king with greatest care;
Louis the Great wish'd for the maid,
Mons yielded: so would you, my fair.

from going every where, from exposing himself to the fire, which was at first very brisk, or from bearing fascines, for this is the fashion: but what sort of fascines, my dear cousin? all from orange-trees, laurels, and pomegranates! they feared nothing but too great a profusion of perfumes. Never was there so beautiful or so delightful a country seen: you can conceive what it must be, from your knowledge of Italy. This is the country M. de Savoie has taken pleasure in losing and destroying: can we call this good policy? We expect the little colonel (the marquis de Grignan), who is preparing to set out for Piémont: for this expedition to Nice is only *throwing the bait in expectation of the game*; he will not be here when you pass; but do you know who will find you here? my son, who is coming to spend the summer with us, and to meet his governor, by following the footsteps of his mother.

By the bye, speaking of mother and son, do you know, my dear cousin, that I have been for these ten days or more in a sorrow of heart, from which you alone have had the power of relieving me, while I have been employed in writing to you. This has been occasioned by the illness of the dowager madame de Lavardin, my most intimate and oldest friend: this woman, of such excellent and sound understanding; this illustrious widow, who gathered us all under her wing; this person of such exalted merit, has fallen suddenly into a sort of apoplexy; she is drowsy, paralytic, and feverish: when she is roused, she talks rationally, but she soon relapses: in short, my child, my friendship could not sustain a greater loss; I should feel it keenly. The duchess de Chaulnes writes to me respecting her, and is very much grieved at her illness; madame de la Fayette still more so: indeed, her merit is so well known, that every one is interested as in a public

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loss: judge then what her friends must feel. I am informed, that M. de Lavardin is very much affected; I hope it is true; it is an honour to him, to grieve for a mother to whom he is in a manner indebted for whatever he is. Adieu, my dear cousin; my heart is full, I can write no more: if I had begun with this melancholy subject, I should not have had the courage to chat with you as I have done.

I shall say no more respecting the Temple, I have given my opinion of it already; but I shall never like or approve it. Not so with regard to you; for I love you, and shall love and approve you always.

POSTSCRIPT BY MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

The dearest friends must part; M. and madame de Nevers have deserted you. Alas! my dear cousin, how I pity you! I remember, however, that they were your consolation under the loss you sustained in cardinal de Bouillon, and the abbé de Polignac: as you have recovered these friends, may they not in turn console you for M. and madame de Nevers? For my own part, I believe they will not fail, as soon as the conclave is over; for, till then, the intercourse that is wished to be established with the Holy Ghost, will be a little interrupted by yours. My mother has said all that is necessary on the verses of M. de Nevers: some of the pictures and expressions are proofs of a most humorous imagination: I should like to enliven mine with a collection of his works. But what say you to finding such excellent morsels of Britany at Grignan? my mother and my brother, whom M. de Chaulnes left at the Rocks, and whom he will meet here! They are delighted at the idea of doing him the honours of the place: you may judge what their company will be to me; I flatter my-

self they will be the means of keeping you here, and that, finding so many relations in your way, you will not be able to proceed farther. I assure you, I wish it sincerely, and, without pretending to supply to you the place of madame de Nevers, I wish to do my best to amuse you, to show you how much you are beloved, and in what estimation you are held in this house. Adieu, my dearest cousin; your mistress † expects you with a true lover-like impatience.

LETTER * DCCCCXCII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, May 15, 1691.

I PERCEIVED distinctly that, since I came here, I was something more to you than usual: I knew not precisely why it was so, but you have now told me; it is because I am your neighbour, my dear cousin. I delight in this new alliance; I had felt it strongly, and placed it in the list of the agreeable reasons that had induced me to come here; but I had not the wit to give it a name. You are my neighbour then, so long as you remain at Rome; for if ever we meet in Paris, particularly at the Temple, we shall be only cousins. You see I have received all your letters, sometimes slowly, sometimes speedily, without my being able to account for it. My daughter thinks you have not received four impromptu verses, which she wrote in the joy of her heart, at having gained her law-suit against the *lazy* fury of madame de Bury; for you have not mentioned them. I have seen the little leaf, which always shows the pro-

† Mademoiselle de Grignan, afterwards marchioness de Simiane.

found wisdom of the duchess de Chaulnes; I am not surprised at it.

We are glad to have du Charmel's answer to M. de Nevers; it is good substantial prose, and seems to come from a man who is satisfied with his situation. The religious lines of the abbé Têtu are also excellent, and those from the pen of a true penitent. For my part, I am not sorry to see a person revel in the joy of a good conscience: when, like M. du Charmel, we have received favours from God in abundance, and are penetrated with gratitude for the distinction, I like they should be avowed, and that due honour should be paid to the bounty of him to whom we owe them. This may be shown in another way; but that is not the one which presents itself to me: I therefore like the artless manner in which he paints the composure and tranquillity of his soul. By dint of lending the beautiful verses of M. de Nevers, which occasioned this answer, I have lost them: so that I beg you, my dear cousin, to bring them to me again when you have made a pope. I highly approve your having asked leave of absence at this time; for if you were to delay it a moment, the new pope might die also, and, as you say, you would still have to begin again. But is it not necessary that you should bring these bulls? Come, however, in what way you please; you will always be welcome.

I have already told you that we expect my son; he is to set out on the 18th or 20th of this month. We are grieved at the length of your conclave; it prevents you from seeing and hearing cardinal le Camus, and from talking to me about him. He is a man of whom I have formed the highest opinion, and whom it will give me the greatest pleasure to see: I shall at least have all

you catch from him. I believe my daughter is writing to her unfortunate princess †: I can easily conceive the ruin of her former face; it would not have been so bad, if she had not placed herself in such a wretched situation, and if, instead of being tormented by all these Spaniards, she had put herself under the protection of a king of France who is every where victorious, beloved of Heaven; who confounds and disperses, in the most delightful manner possible, all those great politicians, assembled round the false king of England at the Hague. It was to sap and destroy his mighty power, that they had collected together; and the result was, that they were on the spot to witness the conquest of the beautiful and important town of Mons. I assure you, my dear cousin, that if M. and madame de Vaudemont had not attached themselves to all these persons, they would have done a thousand times better, and the princess would not have been so thin. We, who every day sing *Te Deum*, who have taken Nice and all this fine coast, are quite well: we sing M. de Nevers's Italian song; our band is in possession of it, and we will treat you with it when you come. I intend that you shall give me all your songs, as you have given several to madame de ****; for they are now all scattered in your letters, like the leaves of the sibyl: we always admire them highly, and you are still further improved by your intercourse with M. de Nevers. No one knows better than we do, the charms and beauty of his house at Frènes: that only was wanting to your happiness; you will find resources from different walks and new pleasures.

† The princess de Vaudemont.

POSTSCRIPT BY MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

You have only to imagine, my dearest, that I say the same things to you that my mother does, and you will find that I write very well; for a repetition would not be very delightful after the way in which she has treated the different subjects. I must, however, say two words to you on that of my princess. What! has she no longer that pretty face, the picture of which I have so carefully preserved? It is pity, indeed, that it should have disappeared. This is the noble performance of the Spaniards, to torture people till they are no longer to be recognised. I place the restraint in which you inform me this poor woman lives at Rome, in the list of the cruelties of the inquisition. She has desired me, in writing to me by you, to answer her letter at Brussels: this correspondence is a little like that we should have at Quebec; but though it may not be a very frequent, I assure you it is a very affectionate one on my part; and that I cannot help entering deeply into the sorrows of this amiable woman. But I have interrupted my mother.

MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ, IN CONTINUATION.

I CONCLUDE my letter, by embracing you on both sides with the fervent affection you know me to entertain for you. I salute cardinal de Bouillon with infinite respect; I am cardinal de Janson's very humble servant. I say to the abbé de Polignac what you know I think of him. You will distribute my compliments to the rest as you think proper.

LETTER * DCCCCXCIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE CHAULNES.

Grignan, May 15, 1691.

Good heavens, my dear governor, what a personage you are! it will be impossible now to live with you; your steps are so grand, that we shall be thrown into the greatest embarrassments. What trouble did you not give the other day to the poor Spanish ambassador! Do you think it can be a very pleasant thing to put back for the whole length of a street? And what a bustle have you not created with the emperor's ambassador, on the franchises! The poor sbirre who is so severely lashed, is an excellent proof of it; in short, you are become so punctilious, that all Europe will think twice, before it will know how to comport itself with your excellency. If you bring this humour to us, we shall no longer recognise you.—Let us now talk of the greatest affair at court. Your imagination leads straight to new enterprises; you suppose that the king, not content with Mons and Nice, wished to besiege Namur also: not at all; there is a circumstance which has given his majesty more pain, and has cost him more time, than his late conquests; this is the total defeat of the top-knots: no more head-dresses aspiring to the clouds, no more helmets, no more points, no more burgancts, no more jardinières: the princesses have appeared with heads reduced at least full three quarters in height; they make use of their own hair, as they did ten years ago. I can give you no idea of the noise and confusion this change has occasioned at Versailles. Every one reasoned profoundly upon this business, and it was a business that engrossed the at-

tention of every one. We have been assured that M. de Langlée has written a treatise upon this change, to send into the country; as soon as we receive it, sir, we will not fail to send it you; and, in the mean time, I very humbly kiss the hands of your excellency.

You will have the goodness to excuse it, if what I here add is not written in so firm a hand as the above: my letter was sealed, and I open it to say that we have just left the table, where we have drunk your health in the most excellent and most refreshing white wine that was ever tasted, with three Bretons of your acquaintance, messieurs du Cambout, de Trévigni, and du Guesclin; madame de Grignan began, the rest followed. Britany has done its duty: "To the health of the ambassador; to the health of the duchess de Chaulnes, agreed; to our dear governor, agreed; to our governor's lady: sir, I pass the toast to you; madam, I receive it." In short, so much has been done, that we have even given the toast to M. de Coulanges; it is for him to answer.

LETTER *DCCCCXCIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, June 23, 1691.

Alas, my dear Coulanges! and so you have the gout in your foot, in your elbow, in your knee; and the pain will not have far to go, before it will seize upon your whole person: ah! you cry out! you complain! you no longer sleep! you no longer eat! you no longer drink! you no longer sing! you no longer laugh! Ah! mirth and you are no longer the same! this idea brings tears into my eyes; but, while I weep, you are perhaps cured: I hope so, and wish so. The charming couplets you sent to madame de Nevers, not-

withstanding your gout, cannot certainly be the last you have written: they highly deserve to be followed by others. You must have received our letters of the 15th of May, which will have proved to you, that at last, at last, we have received all yours; this is also an answer to two, for we owe you an acknowledgement of those of May 20, and June 12. This then settles our account; I should be very sorry to have lost any one of your letters; besides their own value, which you know I do not consider trifling, they have almost always been accompanied by the works of M. de Nevers, of which I have made a little collection that I would not part with for a great deal of money. I know not why you do not receive our letters, and still less why you do not make a pope; on observing how you set about it at first, I thought nothing in the world so easy; but we see, on the contrary, that nothing is so difficult; I believe the Holy Ghost must take the affair in hand, after all: oh! hasten then to pray to him on the subject, for we long to see you. M. de Chaulnes informs my daughter, that the thing that is the least thought of in the conclave, is the making a pope, and that by this he tells her all the secret; his whole letter is extremely amusing. My son had so great a desire to obey this duke, that, had it not been for my daughter, I think he would have perished in the undertaking; not for the sake of going to Rome, but to see so illustrious an ambassador, and you also, my dear cousin; but madame de Grignan decided imperatively, as mistress of the house, and as a Provençale, who is better acquainted than we are with the power of the sun in Italy at this season. Return then to see us, my dear neighbour; come and embrace us. I consent to all madame de Coulanges is doing for her Temple; she will not often have our incense, but she will perhaps

set the higher value upon it. You say, that while you are not with your young mistress, if she found another husband, you think she would accept him. Tell the ambassador to read you the account I sent him of the delightful trip our duchess has taken to Marly. Make all my compliments for me; you know better than I do, to whom they ought to be given.

LETTER *DCCCCXCV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Grignan, July 12, 1691.

I HAVE been at Grignan these eight months, my dear cousin. I informed you of the courage I possessed in coming here all the way from Britany: I have not repented my journey. My daughter is amiable, you well know, and she loves me dearly. M. de Grignan has every quality to render society pleasing. Their house is very beautiful, and very magnificent: it has a noble appearance: they live extremely well, and see a great deal of company. The only sorrow we have had during the winter, was to see the master of the house ill of a fever, from which the bark had great difficulty to extricate him, notwithstanding its powers. At length he is well. He has taken a journey to Aix, where they were delighted to see him again. On the other hand, my son is also come from Britany to drink the waters of this country, where the good society, to which he very much adds by his presence, contributes more to his restoration than any other remedy. We are all here therefore together. There is a young Grignan whom you do not know, who supports her station well. She is sixteen years of age, is very pretty, and has a good understanding; we do not fail to improve it. All

this goes on well, and indeed too well; for I find that the days, and the months, and the years, pass so swiftly, that I can no longer retain them. Time, in its flight, hurries me away, in spite of myself; in vain I endeavour to stop him, he drags me along: the thought of this alarms me. The little Grignan has spent the winter with us; he has had a fever this spring; it is only within a fortnight that he has rejoined his regiment, which happily was not at Coni*. He cannot therefore be accused of having fled.

The knowledge of when we are to set out for Paris, is still in the secrets of Providence. It is impossible to speak to you more freely of the great *I*, as M. Nicole says, than I have just done: but it is what you wish. Let us return to you, my good cousin. You have been, I believe, to your assembly of states; I delayed writing to you till they were over. I know not what you are doing. You intend to go and pay your court at Fontainbleau; you will do well. You will be fortunate in pleasing his majesty, effect it in whatever way you will. Adieu, my dear cousin. I ask pardon of your wit for this dull letter; but such letters must sometimes be written.

* M. de Bulonde, who had the management of the siege of Coni, deceived by false advices, abandoned it precipitately, and retreated in great disorder. The excessive grief betrayed by Louvois, seems to give the lie to those who pretended that Bulonde had only obeyed his orders, and seconded his plan for the prolongation of the war. This general was sent to the Bastille.

LETTER * DCCCCXCVI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, July 24, 1691.

"SHORT reckonings make long friends:" I have received all your letters, my dear neighbour; that of May 20, that of June 4, about which you were uneasy, and the last of July 4; with the epistle M. de Nevers sent you from Genoa, and, in short, all the works of this duke, who is the true son of Apollo and the Muses. You ask me if I do not treasure all his productions: indeed I do; I have not lost a single one; they have highly amused us, as well as every one who has passed this way whom we have deemed worthy of them. The last epistle is rather above Paulina's capacity; but we have had the pleasure of finding ourselves capable of explaining to her what she did not understand. With respect to the description of the dinner, it is suited to the taste of the best guests; and it made M. de Grignan's, the chevalier de St. André's, my son's, and all our mouths water: I never saw so excellent a repast; I have just placed it among the other wonders of this duke. To conclude the article of letters: when you have received that of the 25th of June, and this, you will have received all.

Let us now come to yours, the beginning of which had nearly brought me to tears. How can I fancy you confined to your bed, afflicted in every limb and every joint of your poor little body; and your nerves so affected, that you can neither stir hand nor foot? This is enough to drive us to despair: but to see that all this produces a song upon your melancholy situation, accompanied by another, the most humorous in the

world, on a thing which you see daily; you may suppose, my poor cousin, this is a real comfort to our hearts, as it proves that the vital principle is not attacked. This fit of the gout has only given you the blue devils, and made you look forward to futurity under the most melancholy aspect in which it can present itself to you; but this situation, so violent, and so contrary to your disposition, has not had leisure to make any impression on you.

In spite of St. Peter, which is past, and of the predictions of the physicians, a pope is made, and the cardinals will leave the conclave without the event having cost them their lives; on the contrary, they will recover their health, and their liberty. It is not the first time that gentlemen of the faculty have erred in judgement. The duke de Chaulnes has written us a letter by the courier, dated the 15th, which brings the news of the exaltation: he thinks of nothing now but of coming to see us; he will be with us a fortnight; and though the pope* be a Neapolitan, he maintains that the affair of the bulls is so well disposed of, that it will be the signal-gun for saddling horses, and setting out for Grignan; this hope gives us great pleasure, and very much abridges the share I wished to take in all your melancholy calendars: it is at an end, however, my dear cousin; you are cured, you are set out, you are on the point of arriving here. I embrace you a thousand times. Let us talk a little of the table in the ambassador's closet, of the chaos of letters, of the deep abyss of bags, of the confusion of papers, from which, like the infernal regions, when once a poor letter is thrown into it, it never comes out again. It

* Cardinal Pignatelli was elected pope on the 12th of July, and took the name of Innocent XII.

was a miracle indeed that mine was found; but it was my daughter's letter, in which I had written: she had a great inclination to be offended at being thus lost and confounded with the rest; but I appeased her in the best way I could, by assuring her that the ambassador read what she wrote to him, with the deepest attention, and that it was upon my lines he had not condescended to throw a single glance: and it is the fact; for he said I had not written to him. She replied, "But as it was my letter, why consign it to this chaos?" To this I knew not what to answer; the ambassador will think of it, if he pleases. It is true, that my poor letters have only the value you give to them, by reading them as you do; for they have their tones, and are unbearable when they are brayed out, or spelled word by word: be this as it may, my dear cousin, you give them a thousand times more honour than they deserve.

LETTER * DCCCCXCVII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Grignan, July 26, 1691.

I AM so astonished at the news of the sudden death of M. de Louvois †, that I know not how or where to begin

† The death of Louvois, as it is well known, has been the object of many discussions. It has been said that he was poisoned. Saint Simon affirms it; and his account charges the king with this crime. Voltaire says, with reason, that this is repugnant to every idea that has been formed of the character of Lewis XIV. Of those who felt like him, some said that it was a revenge of the duke de Savoy's; others, that Louvois poisoned himself. The last opinion deserves to be inquired into. It is agreed on all sides, that he was on the eve of disgrace, that he expected harsh treatment, that he spoke of death as preferable to this

the subject to you. This great minister then, this man of consequence, who held so exalted a situation, whose *le moi (I)*, as M. Nicole says, was so extensive; who was the centre of so many things, is dead: how many affairs, designs, projects, secrets, interests to unravel, wars begun, intrigues, and noble moves at chess, had he not to make and to conduct! "O God, grant me a little time; I want to give check to the duke of Savoy, check-mate to the prince of Orange:" no, no, not a moment, a single moment. Can we reason upon this strange event? indeed we cannot; it is in our closet we must reflect upon it. This is the second minister * you have seen expire since you have been at Rome: nothing is more different than the manner of their death; but nothing more similar than their fortune, and the hundred thousand chains which attached them both to the world.

fall, and that he was a violent and passionate man, whom no scruple restrained. Under all these circumstances, there is nothing very improbable in his suicide. But it appears that this fact was never cleared up; and it is an inconvenience to which we are easily resigned. It is certain, however, that the king made no concealment that the event of his death happened very opportunely to draw him out of difficulties; it is also certain, that the death of this man, who had done so much harm, was a great loss. The epitaph of Louvois, which appeared at that time, gave a good idea of the public opinion respecting him:

Ici gît, sous qui tout plioit,
Et qui de tout avoit connoissance parfaite;
Louvois que personne n'aimoit,
Et que tout le monde regrette.

Here lies one to whom all yielded,
And who knew of all the best;
Louvois, who sense with power wielded,
Whom no one loved, and all lament.

* With M. de Seignelai.

With regard to the great objects which ought to lead you to God, you say you find your religious sentiments shaken by what is passing at Rome and in the conclave. My poor cousin, you are deceived; I have heard that a man of very excellent understanding drew a quite contrary inference from what he saw in this great city; he concluded that the Christian religion must necessarily be all holy and all miraculous, to subsist thus, of itself, in the midst of so many disorders and so much profanation. Do then as he did, draw the same inferences, and believe that this very city was formerly washed with the blood of an infinite number of martyrs; that in the first centuries, all the intrigues of the conclave ended in choosing from among the priests him who appeared to have the greatest zeal and strength to endure martyrdom; that there were thirty-seven popes who suffered, one after the other; and that the certainty of their fate had no influence over them to make them fly from, or refuse, a situation to which death was attached, and a death of the most horrible nature. You have only to read this history, to be convinced that a religion, subsisting by a continual miracle, both in its establishment and its duration, cannot be an invention of men. Men do not think thus: read St. Augustin in his *Vérité de la Religion* (Truth of Religion); read Abbadie*, very different indeed from that great saint, but not unworthy of being compared with him when he speaks of the Christian religion: ask the abbé de Polignac what he thinks of this book. Collect all these ideas, and do not judge so hastily: believe that whatever intrigues may take place in the conclave, it is the Holy Ghost that always makes the pope. God works all, he is the sove-

* Author of a book on the truth of the Christian religion. He was a Protestant.

reign of all, and this is what we ought to think: I have read this sentiment in a good book: "What evil can happen to a man who knows that God does all things, and who loves whatever God does?" And with this, my dear cousin, I take my leave.

LETTER *DCCCCXCVIII.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Grignan, August 14, 1691.

Come hither, that I may embrace you, caress you, and tell you that my daughter, whose approbation you so highly value, is delighted with your two little couplets on the holy father. Nothing, in my opinion, could be better imagined, nor better executed: we have all been in raptures. But, my dear cousin, the duke de Chaulnes, in his letter of July 20, says not a word respecting M. de Louvois †; his death seems to me to demand an exclamation or two. His hopes are very sanguine as to the new pope, though not the work of his hands; all our interest is, that he will give us our bulls, and that you will come and pay us a visit; that day seems to me to be at our finger's end, so swiftly does time pass. You will find my son at Marseilles, who will be there to meet you; this is an attention he owes to our governor, by way of amends for not having gone to Rome.

I long to know what you thought of the return of M. de Pomponne to the ministry: it was to us a subject of real joy: M. and madame de Grignan had no doubt of this event, from a truly prophetic spirit; but I wished

† M. de Louvois died on the 16th July, and it is not surprising that the news of this event should not have reached M. de Chaulnes on the 20th.

it too much even to listen to them; and when madame de Vins sent the news to my daughter, I was so surprised and so transported, that I knew not what I heard: at length I comprehended that it was a very agreeable truth, not only to me but to the rest of the world, for you cannot form an idea how generally his return is approved. I have paid my compliments to madame de Chaulnes and our ambassador, on the choice of M. de Beauvilliers; this is another strange man with whom the king augments his council; which is now perfect, like every thing his majesty does: he is the cleverest man in his kingdom, he is never idle, and provides for every thing; nothing remains but to pray to God, that he may be preserved to us. The dauphin enters into all the councils; do you not also approve this? it is truly associating him with the empire: we have subjects for admiration every where. If your good pope would make peace, it would be an act worthy of himself, and would place us in a situation to praise, with a more tranquil mind, all the wonders we see. Adieu, my dear cousin, you know how I am disposed towards you. M. de Barillons and M. de Jannin are dead; we shall die too.

[*End of the Letters from madame de Sévigné and madame de Grignan, to the duke de Chaulnes and M. de Coulanges, during the stay which the two latter made at Rome.*]

LETTER *DCCCCXCIX.

FROM MADAME DE LA FAYETTE TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 19, 1691.

My health is a little better than it has been; that is, I am not so much afflicted with the vapours; I have no other disorder. Be not uneasy respecting my health, my complaints are not dangerous; and though they should become so, it would be only from great languor and natural decay, which is not the business of an hour: be easy, therefore, with regard to the life of your poor friend: you will have time to be prepared for whatever may happen, unless from some unforeseen accident, to which all mortals are liable, and I more than any other, because I am more mortal than any other; a person in health is a miracle to me. The chevalier de Grignan is my nurse; I am truly grateful to him, and I love him with all my heart. The duchess de Chaulnes came to see me yesterday; my situation excited her pity. My daughter-in-law had a miscarriage a week after her delivery; this happens to many women; it is being very near having two children; her daughter is well: they will have children enough. Our poor friend Croisilles † is still at Saint Gratien; he sends me word that his health is very good in the country; you should see how he is, to wonder that he can boast of health: the chevalier de Grignan and I are really uneasy about him. The abbé Têtu has taken a journey into the country; madame de Chaulnes and I suspect that he is gone to La Trappe. The good madame Lavocat is very ill: but she has been in the world a very long time. I

† Brother of marshal de Catinet.

am wholly yours, my dear friend, and no less devoted to your amiable and excellent party.

I have just been informed that M. de la Feuillade† died last night; if this be true, it is a noble example to us to beware how we torment ourselves with the concerns of life.

LETTER *M.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Paris, September 26, 1691.

Come to Paris for my sake, my dear friend? the very thought alarms me. God forbid that I should thus interfere with your plans; and, though I ardently long for the pleasure of seeing you, I should purchase this pleasure too dear, if it were at your expense. I informed you, a week ago, of the true state of my health; I was then perfectly well; and I have been, as by a miracle, a whole fortnight without the vapours, which is to say in other words, free from all disorders. I have not been so well for these three or four days past; but it is the sight alone of a sealed letter, which I have not opened, that has brought upon me a return of my complaint. I am as much like a woman under the power of enchant-

† François d'Aubisson, duke de la Feuillade, peer and marshal of France, governor of Dauphigny, and father of the last marshal of that name.

Choisy relates, that a few years afterwards, Lewis XIV. suffered the avowal to escape him, that in one year he had been rid of three men whom he could no longer endure, Seignelai, Louvois, and La Feuillade. Voltaire objects, that Seignelai did not die in the same year as the other two. But the truth is, that they died all three in less than eleven months, and Seignelai on the third of November 1690. In the sequel the king might very well take this for one year; and there is not sufficient ground for denying an anecdote which Choisy relates as certain, and connected with other circumstances which confirm it.

ment, as two drops of water are like each other; but after dinner the spell is removed: I wrote to you a month or two since, that this was my evil hour, and at present it is my good one. I hope that my disorder, having turned and changed about, will leave me; but I shall always remain a very weak being, and you cannot imagine how much I am surprised at being so: I was not brought up with the idea that this could ever be the case with me. I return to your journey, my dear: be assured that the pleasure I experience from the thought of seeing you, is a castle in the air to me; but my pleasure would be disturbed, if your journey did not accord with the affairs of madame de Grignan, and with your own. It seems to me, however, setting all considerations of interest aside, that you would both do well to come; but I cannot express to you how much I have been affected at the idea of your returning solely upon my account. I will write you a longer letter, the first opportunity.

LETTER *MI.

FROM MADAME DE LA FAYETTE TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, Wednesday, October 10, 1691.

I HAVE had cruel attacks of the vapours, which have not yet left me, and which adhere to me like the remains of a severe fever. In short, I am a fool, though I am certainly a tolerably wise woman: I wish to thank madame de Grignan for calming my mind; she has written wonders to the chevalier de Grignan.

TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

I RETURN you my thanks, madam, and request you to order the chevalier de Grignan to love me. I love him

with my whole heart: this man is a man. Bring back your mother; you have a thousand affairs of consequence that call you here; beware of looking too narrowly into domestic concerns, and of suffering houses to obstruct your view of cities. There are more interests than one to be attended to in this world. Come here, madam, come to me, for the sake of those who love you, and believe that you will at the same time be giving me the pleasure of seeing your mother.

TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Good heavens, my dear friend, how glad I shall be to see you! I shall weep plentifully; every thing makes me melt into tears. I received letters this morning from my son, the abbé, who was in Poitou, within two leagues of madame de la Troche. A gentleman of consequence, son-in-law of madame de la Rochebardon, with whom madame de la Troche is at present, came to take leave of my son, and it was there he heard of the death of La Troche*, by the gazette, if it please you; for I had never mentioned it to my son, who describes to me the affliction of this gentleman at having such intelligence to communicate at his own house: this has made my tears flow afresh; indeed they flow often when I am alone. M. de Pomponne believed madame de la Troche to be rich; I have written to him, and he has informed me that the duchess du Lude had deceived him, and that they have presented a petition for her. Croisilles is just gone from hence, he came from Saint Gratien to see me: I gave your compliments to him: he is quite well. My grand-daughter squints like an owl: no matter; madame de Grignan did the same; this is saying

* Killed at the battle of Leuze, September 20, 1691.

every thing. I am come to the end of my paper, and am, if possible, yours more than ever.

LETTER * MII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Grignan, October 27, 1691.

Our correspondence is so tottering, my dear cousin, that, having no hope of fixing it more firmly while we are at such a distance from each other, I wait for you at the cover, in other words, at Paris and Versailles, to answer your letter. In the mean time, I have a great desire not to attend to this exactness, but to pass lightly over all you tell me respecting your states, and come at once to what interests my heart much more, which is the pension we are informed the king has given you at a time when you had scarcely the civility to dare to ask him for it. This circumstance has pleased me; for, besides the favour being considerable, the charms with which it is accompanied must not be forgotten. I do not know all the particulars, and I request them from you; but I seem to perceive that M. de Beauvilliers has on this occasion acted the part of one of the best men in the world, and of a good friend, which is not less estimable, and which cannot be separated from it. My heart told me that, soon or late, you would feel the value of so precious a friendship; and I experience true joy in finding that I was not deceived. We must love every thing that God does. He would not permit your fortune to be such as from all appearances it was likely to have been: we must submit to this, and I fear I have felt the privation for you more keenly than you have felt it for yourself. You must accept and receive what he pleases to give you, at a period when your misfortunes render

this benefit worthy of your gratitude. You must therefore thank God, the king, and your excellent friend. I do this internally, my dear cousin, with feelings which have made me but too much alive to all the sorrows of your life. This is the heartfelt congratulation which you will receive from me. Here follow some others, which are not the less agreeable for being less interested: those of M. de Grignan, of my daughter, my son, and M. de Coulanges, who is just returned from Rome. They all assure you of their own joy, and of the part they take in yours. I shall feel it in every instance, should this charm be the means of diffusing others over the rest of your life; if you are happy; if it secures you henceforth from the just mortifications you had experienced, and from the vexation of having always to ask favours of the king: in short, if you spend the time God has given you to serve him in true repose. I thank him with all my heart, and wish you his grace; for after all the deaths we have lately witnessed, and on which we might discourse for a year if we pleased, it is impossible not to wish a Christian death to those we love. This, my dear cousin, is all you will have from me to-day. We said that the last letter I wrote to you was a dull one: this is much in the same style; for why should we rejoice that you have formed a new attachment to this corrupter of the human race, whom Voiture has so much decried? But it ends in so lofty a strain, by wishing you everlasting blessings, that I fear I shall be accused of having mounted into the sublime.

Where is my niece de Dalets? Where is this Marie de Rabutin, my god-daughter? I embrace them both, and address my letter to you at the house of the latter, believing nothing more natural than that you should be with her.

LETTER * MIII.

FROM MADAME DE LA FAYETTE TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, January 24, 1692.

Alas, my dear! all I have to tell you of my health is bad; in short, I have no rest day or night, in body or in mind; I am no longer a living being, so far as regards the one or the other; I perish visibly; I must die when it pleases God, and I submit. The intense cold we have had, prevents me from seeing madame de Lavardin. Be assured, my dearest friend, that you, of all persons in the world, are the one whom I have most truly loved.

[*N. B. Madame de la Fayette, and M. de Bussy Rabutin, dying in the course of the year* 1693, *this part of the correspondence naturally ends after the four following letters. It appears also that madame de Grignan remained at Paris with her mother during the years* 1692 *and* 1693, *and that she returned to Grignan only a short time before her. In this correspondence therefore, there is no real vacancy, and consequently little appearance that any letters of this period will be recovered.*]

LETTER * MIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Paris, January 27, 1692.

We arrived here, my dear cousin, at the end of the year, soon enough for M. de Grignan to be received into the order of knighthood, but not sufficiently soon

to have the honour and the pleasure of seeing and embracing you. I thought of the words of the opera:

J'aurai beau me presser, j'arriverai trop tard *.

You did indeed set out at the time you mentioned, and I know by my niece de Montataire, that you are either at your country-house, or at Autun, quietly enjoying the favour the king has granted you. You required this indulgence; and though I have expressed myself very unseasonably, and very uselessly, by making comparisons between what might be, and what was, I have very much felt this last disposition of Providence, whose every arrangement I ought to adore, professing, as I do, to be entirely devoted to his will. It is indeed a folly to look back upon the past. I ask pardon of God, and of you also.

Let me hear from you; tell me what sort of life you lead: whether my niece de Dalets, and madame de Toulonjon, do not contribute to render it happy: whether your mind does not contract, as M. Nicole expresses it, by the distance of the objects that set it in motion? My daughter and I found that we were a little injured; but we begin to recover, and our friends are once more willing to own us. I can answer for you, my dear cousin, and I have heard you were very well at Fontainbleau; and when you are not at court I rely on my niece de Dalets to call forth your vivacity by the exercise of her own. I have too often recommended you to each other, to fear for either of you the accidents which happen to others. The whole court is full of joy and rejoicings at the marriage of M. de Chartres, and mademoiselle de Blois. There will be a grand ball, for which all those who say they have not a farthing in the world are making pre-

* It will be in vain for me to press forward, I shall arrive too late.

parations that will cost them from two to three thousand pistoles. This makes us doubt their poverty, which, however, is real. But the French have resources in their wish to please the king, which would be incredible, whatever we were told, if we did not witness them with our own eyes. We shall see therefore all the courtiers, old and young, dressed according to their age, and every one most splendidly.

M. de Grignan and my daughter assure you of their best services. They have a little girl here, who, without possessing her mother's beauty, has so well tempered and softened the air of the Grignans, that she is really very handsome. You will some day perhaps judge for yourself. I sincerely hope so, and that you will continue to love me as much as I love you. I embrace my dear niece de Dalets.

LETTER * MV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Paris, April 12, 1692.

I SUPPOSE, my good cousin, that you did not wait for my answer, to be certain of my approbation of my niece's bout-rimé. It would not disgrace the duke of Burgundy's governor. It contains all that can be said on the education of a young man †. More noble and more solid lessons could not be given him. I congratulate this youth, who has so fine a name (M. de Langhac), that he will not be allowed to be a moderately worthy man, with a mother and a grandfather who so well know what he ought to be. I do not tell you that

† This sonnet, in the manner of the quatrains of Pibrac, was addressed to her son. It has appeared to the editor to [illegible] be inserted here.

you both appear to me to have as much wit as ever; you must be fully aware of it yourselves. I wish you may be able to say the same of my daughter and me. To make amends for my fault in having said nothing of our friend Corbinelli, here he comes to talk to you himself.

FROM M. DE CORBINELLI.

THOUGH I have so bad a cold, sir, as to have my mouth shut to every thing like wit, I have thought the verses I have seen excellent. Our friend, father Bouhours, sent me this morning *les Nouvelles Remarques sur la Langue* (New Remarks on Language). I found you very agreeably quoted, as a man whose authority ought to regulate the language. I tell you no news. There never was so much respecting the preparations in all quarters for a memorable campaign, of which you alone would be worthy of being the historian, since you cannot be the captain. Adieu, sir. If you were all I could wish, you would perhaps be more than you desire †. I am madame Dalets' most obedient servant.

LETTER * MVI.

FROM THE COUNT DE BUSSY TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Chaseu, December 2, 1692.

LITTLE stories do not displease you, my dear cousin. I send you one, written by Theophilus, in Latin, which appeared to me worthy of being translated, and of amusing you. Cured, thank Heaven, of love and for-

† This must not be taken literally, nor must the philosophical Corbinelli be thought ill of for having adopted this language. He treated Bussy like a sick man, whose mortified vanity stood in need of some indulgence, to support the bitterness of his soul. These praises are not flattery, but consolation.

tune, I am happy in being able to employ myself in trifles. I even find that they contribute most to the charms of life, for they cost nothing to the body or to the soul; and though I am convinced by experience, particularly within these five or six years, that the work of salvation alone is capable of satisfying the heart, it is still necessary for me to amuse my mind. God, who endowed me with cheerfulness at my birth, wishes me, no doubt, to enjoy myself; and especially, when it is at the expense only of Larissa and Glison. Your niece is of my opinion. We both embrace you, and the dear countess also, with all our hearts. I recommend our friend Corbinelli to read you the Latin of my little story, and to set off my French to the best advantage.

Translation of a Fragment from Theophilus.*

Larissa was fond of telling stories, and she told them well. Finding herself in company one day, she was very desirous to recount the follies of her youth, which she did in the following manner:

"I was in the service of a Roman citizen with a young Greek, his slave, whom a shipwreck had reduced to the same extremity, though born free. Nature had imprinted upon the countenance of this young man, all the marks of nobility and of good education, which he owed to his birth, and the care of his parents. It was easy to perceive, that he was not born for the

* This story is translated elsewhere, in a style more flowery, and more analogous to the original, which is written in the manner of Petronius and Apulius. But Bussy's version presents a sort of simple elegance, which many readers may prefer. It has besides given an opportunity to insert the letter which follows, and which is the last of madame de Sévigné's correspondence with her cousin. This is a sufficient reason for not deeming the fragment superfluous.

situation to which his misfortune had reduced him. If he had to carry any burthen, he sunk under the lightest that could be imposed: he was desirous however of doing every thing, and forgot his birth, in endeavouring to accommodate himself to the present state of his fortune. But, unable to combat with the fatigue and hard fare of a servant, he at length became dejected, and was so indifferent about himself, as to neglect even to comb his hair, which was the most beautiful that ever was seen. In a short time, he became pale and wrinkled; his eyes were hollow and languishing; his hands rough and discoloured; indeed, it was no longer possible to recognise him. Sorrow had depressed his mind, as much as fatigue had injured his health. He often sighed, and his affliction excited my pity. I thought fortune very unjust towards him; I exhorted him to take comfort; I wept over his misfortunes; I taught him the duties of his office, and I even sometimes assisted him in the discharge of them. This misery did not deprive him of a noble air, and an inexpressible superiority over me, which made me feel the difference of his birth, and to which I willingly submitted. He was sensible of the obligations he owed me, and thanked me with the politeness of a courtier. At length, his various good qualities made so strong an impression upon me, that, believing I felt only pity for his misfortunes, I found love for his person lurking in my heart, and I at length loved him to distraction."

Larissa, by this story, had attracted the attention of the whole company, but particularly of two young girls who counterfeited sleep, lest propriety should oblige them to retire, if they appeared to understand the story. One of them having opened her eyes, to look at Larissa, as if unintentionally, closed them again immediately. The other pretending to awake, "Is it

day-light already?" said she, and blushed as she said it. The company understood their artifices, and it was a subject of merriment to them. In the mean time, Larissa had ceased speaking, by observing, that she would not finish the account of her adventure, from the fear of giving pain to these young girls; and she threatened the company with some old serious histories: but Eugenio, impatient to hear the rest of the story, "Ah, Larissa!" said he, "these girls have only feigned sleep, for the purpose of listening to you with less restraint. I assure you they are more eager than any of us, to know the end of your history. Continue, I conjure you," said he, embracing her. She consented, promised to finish the story as modestly as she could, and, making the young girls draw near her, said to them:

Il est permis aux jeunes gens
De n'être pas toujours si sages *:

and thus resumed:

"At one moment, I complained of Love, and at the next I prayed to him. 'Great deity!' said I, 'either cure me of my passion, or make me beloved by its object.' But I could no longer eat, no longer sleep. The beauty of Glison (this was the name of him I loved), returned daily; for time, which compasses every thing, had alleviated his sorrows. For myself, I was scarcely to be recognised; and, in proportion as the charms of Glison increased, my secret passion altered my mind, my countenance, and my disposition. I dared not reveal my love, and I was in despair at concealing it; but Glison knew not my disorder. He pitied me, and repaid with gratitude only, the obligations he owed me, contenting himself with assisting

* Young persons are allowed not to be always so prudent.

me in my duties as a slave, as I had assisted him in his. But, at length, finding myself no longer mistress of my passion, I saw plainly that I must avow it. One Friday then, O happy day! a day I shall never forget, having found Glison upon my bed, where he often reposed himself after dinner, I entreated him, bursting into tears, to take pity on me. He opposed not my wishes, and even appeared glad that he had saved my life.

"Enjoy yourselves, my children, while youth allows you to do so. The remembrance of past pleasures will be the only ones you will know in your old age."

LETTER *MVII.

REPLY OF MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE COUNT DE BUSSY.

Paris, December 10, 1692.

Your little story, my dear cousin, is so modestly wrapped up, that one may praise it without a blush; but the reflections of your letter have given us as much pleasure as the story. Your arguments contained in a dozen lines, which are at once just, solid, and playful, make us easily recognise your happy character, and say with our friend Corbinelli, that your translations do honour to the originals, but that no translator will ever do justice to you. I have only to wish you and my dear niece the long enjoyment of a life which might even excite the envy of those who pity you. Is it not true, niece? You will not contradict me; and you will both continue to love me,—if you please.

LETTER * MVIII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADEMOISELLE DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, May 10, 1694.

I FEEL myself highly honoured, charming Paulina, by your goodness in addressing me, to make me the confidant of your friendship for the duchess de Villeroi: she certainly received your letter with every sentiment you could wish; and would already have answered it, but for the melancholy event of the death of madame de Barbesieux †, which has thrown all her relations and friends into great affliction. The poor little duchess ‡ has been almost dead with grief, literally so; I saw her for three hours with the vapours, to so violent and unusual a degree, that we were quite alarmed for her: her grief is now confined to moderate limits; but it is a wound that will long bleed in the family. The archbishop de Rheims § says, he shall never advise M. de Barbesieux to marry again, from the impossibility of finding another woman equally perfect: but I shall advise the contrary, if he will take one ¶ from my hand; for I know a little masterpiece, not of despicable and perishable riches, but of every rare and adorable perfection, who might very easily make him forget what he has lost, and render him the happiest of men. After having wept and bewailed her for three days at his cottage at Lestang, he will return on Saturday evening to

† Catharine Louise de Crussol d'Uzez, who died May 4, 1694.

‡ Marguerite le Tellier, sister of M. de Barbesieux, duchess de Villeroi.

§ Charles-Maurice le Tellier, uncle of M. de Barbesieux.

¶ It is Paulina de Grignan that M. de Coulanges means, and the same to whom this letter is addressed.

Versailles, and to his duty. The duchess de Villeroi is come here, to spend a few days with her mother *; for myself, I am going to-morrow with my weak legs, to carry my poor arms to Saint Martin, where I shall be some time with cardinal de Bouillon. I wish the air of Saint Martin may restore my shoulders to their duty; but the wind is so dry and piercing, that it is more calculated to kill than to cure: have you such weather at Grignan? At length, the departure of Madame de Sévigné and the chevalier de Grignan takes place to-morrow; you cannot fail to be pleased at having such guests: would to God I could accompany them! but what is deferred is not lost. I still believe firmly, that I shall some day find myself there again, in full admiration of all your grandeur; for this chapter on one side, all these escutcheons in ducal mantles on the other, this magnificent castle, these well-furnished apartments, these tables in the gallery, the crowd of persons going and coming, and then this count and countess, who fill the castle so well, and entertain their friends so nobly, are indeed to me neither more nor less than the glory of Niquée, and an abode which suits my taste in every respect: expect me then, adorable Paulina, and be assured that you will never see any one arrive at Grignan who honours and esteems you more than I do.

I doubt not that madame de Coulanges will give you herself some account of her health, which is much better than it was.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES.

Since your departure, mademoiselle, nothing has been talked of here but your letters: but I am tired of hearing more of your words than your deeds; you can never

* Anne de Souvré, marchioness de Louvois.

know what it is to feel your own loss, and it is a fortunate circumstance for you. I send you my compliments on the tragical death of madame de Barbesieux; the same to madame de Grignan; of whom it is very good of me to think, without complaining that she has taken madame de Sévigné away from me to-day. I own to you that I can form to myself no idea of comfort, except in that of going to Grignan, where I hope you will receive me better than you did the first time I took this journey, when you did not make your appearance there. Adieu, mademoiselle; I shall be very much obliged to you, if you will remind M. and madame de Grignan of the way in which I honour them. I rejoice with you that I am not dead; you would have lost a person very much attached to your charms.

LETTER * MIX.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, May 24, 1691.

It will be exactly a fortnight to-morrow since you took your departure; it is time therefore, my amiable governess, to write to you at Grignan, and assure you that you are heartily welcome there. We heard from you at Moulins, and so far your journey had been prosperous; I hope it continued so, and that at the present moment, recovered from all your fatigues, you are enjoying the sight of many whom you love, and all the pleasure inseparable from the house you inhabit. Of myself, I must tell you that I set out for Saint Martin's† on the same day you set out from hence; and as you are no enemy to details, I will give you an account of

† An abbey beautifully situated near Pontoise, of which cardinal de Bouillon was titulary.

all my proceedings since then. I was at Saint Martin's till the Saturday, I cannot say full of mirth and jollity; for I was never more dull nor more out of spirits, without knowing why, nor a worse companion: Saint Martin's, and the cardinal, have always inexpressible charms for me; but this shoulder and this hand, which are not free from pain, and which are continually playing me tricks, have thrown me into a stupidity and lowness of spirits, from which I cannot rouse myself. This makes me resolve to attend to my health; and for this purpose I have given myself up for a week past to bleeding and repeated medicines, from which I do not yet feel all the effects I expect to do; but it is to be hoped that, having myself entered on my duty, my good constitution will return to it also. This, then, my adorable governess, is my present situation; I have had a great many visitors during my course of medicine, and when I am well I shall have employment enough, in going to thank all the good people who interest themselves so much in my health. I am also much better off than many who are afflicted with fever, the purples, and a thousand other disorders. M. de Harlai, the chancellor's son-in-law, is very seriously indisposed; so is the president de Coigneux's lady; but poor mademoiselle de Sanzei is worse than either, and stands a chance, if God does not interpose, of falling into the same complaint as the late duchess de Grammont. It is said that perfumes and jonquils, at a time when such odours are fatal, have reduced her to this extremity. Her disorder has hitherto been qualified by calling it a rheumatism in the bowels; and there is no remedy that has not been resorted to, even to bleeding her in the foot three or four times within two days; in short, she is in such violent agitations and convulsions, that she has no rest but by taking opium, of which they give her too

large a quantity: indeed, the physicians seem to be at a loss for a remedy in this extraordinary complaint. Madame de Coulanges has just sent Saint-Donnat (physician) to mademoiselle de Sanzei, and his return will tell us what we have to expect, with regard to the cure of this poor girl; the misfortune is, that he cannot assist her long, for he is going away immediately. Madame de Poissi is brought to bed of a fine boy: congratulate all who bear the name of Maisons and Lamoignon. The whole city is finding a wife for M. de Barbesieux*, but it is certain that he is still too much afflicted to think of marrying again; I am willing to hope, from all I bear, that he will prefer solid worth to perishable treasures, when he finds himself obliged to have recourse to a second marriage. M. de Barillon is to espouse mademoiselle Doublet to-day: the chevalier de Bezons was also married yesterday. Do you know another person who is going to be married, if he is not so already? I mean the marquis de Grignan; for the news is, that he is to marry, or has married, mademoiselle de Saint Amand. It is for you, madam, to clear up this fact to us; you have, at least, one advantage, that we have a very high opinion of all you will do or may have done; good money, and plenty of it,—this is a great thing in times like these. All the warriors take leave next week; Versailles and the noble houses will be quite desolate. M. and madame de Chaulnes go on Thursday; they and madame de Coulanges are reconciled, and with so good a grace, that there is no longer any remains of the *petoffe* between them, the beginning of which you were witness to. I am going to madame de Villeroi's, who intends to be bled to-day in the foot, merely by way of precaution, and all the family of the

* It is well known, that after the death of Louvois, his father, he was appointed secretary at war.

Louvois will not fail to be there. Next Thursday will be the procession of the shrine of Saint Geneviève; the archbishop and madame de Lesdiguières have not been able to prevent it this year†. Adieu, my amiable friend: I embrace you with infinite affection.

LETTER * MX.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Paris, June 23, 1694.

It is a thousand years since we heard of you; what, my dear governess, is the matter? Can you suppose that you are indifferent to us? No indeed, we love you, and all the inhabitants of the royal chateau in which you reside, dearly. I am just come from Versailles; where I have been for a whole week, leading a very pretty life with all my friends, male and female. I left mademoiselle de Sanzei there, in the delightful road of convalescence: she is very much obliged to you for the concern you have felt for her illness, which has been a very painful, and indeed a very dangerous one; but in the end, youth has conquered; and in future she will not voluntarily rush into

† The scarcity of grain, and the species of famine, which had afflicted France during the year 1693, caused the procession of the shrine of Saint Geneviève to be demanded. Hénault, who makes mention of it, places it in that year, and yet we see that it did not happen till 1694. This is an anachronism of less consequence than any he could commit.

With respect to madame de Lesdiguières, her connexion with the archbishop of Paris, Harlai de Chanvalon, is well known; as it is also that this prelate's connexions with women were not the most edifying. He had passed from the see of Rouen to that of Paris. Among other ballads in vogue at that time against him, we have one very long one, of which every stanza ends with,

Il fait tout ce qu'il défend,
A Paris comme à Rouen ‡.

‡ He practises all he forbids, as much at Paris as at Rouen.

the perfumes by which she is surrounded, when she ought not to do so, though she attributes her illness more to a rowing upon the water than to the jonquils. But a strange adventure, which happened to me at Versailles, was the death of my little lackey, who, you know, sung so well. I arrived at Versailles on the Friday evening: in the night he was seized with a violent fever, and pain in his side; and so many fatal accidents crowded upon him, that he died on the Monday morning at ten o'clock: but why should he not die? The duke de Sully and M. de Rebenac are dead. Madame de Verneuil and the duchess du Lude, who were going to Sully on their journey, reached no farther than Montargis; the duchess (de Sully), who travelled post, arrived at the end of the journey: and they are all returned here. The duchess is at Saint Denis with the nuns of Sainte Marie. The only son of the beautiful madame de Fresnoy is also dead; in short, we see nothing but funerals, and talk of nothing but sick people. The princess d'Enrichemont, now reigning duchess de Sully, has the small-pox, and madame de Beringhen the measles; but I am much less concerned for them, than for madame de Coulanges, who has lost her time and money with Saint Donnat. The pains of the colic are returned with greater violence than ever; the swelling of her stomach and bowels is become so considerable, that, the disorder which threatens her being now no longer doubtful, she has for these three days past, with the approbation of the knowing ones, placed herself in the hands of Carette *, who makes her take medicines, and the waters of St. Mion, in which she is to drop seven drops of a liquid that works all the miracles of which

* This Carette, an Italian who took the title of marquis, was a quack, whom some success had brought into vogue, and who thereby merited the shafts of La Bruyère.

you have heard. Madame de Coulanges suffered [illegible] from these medicines on the two first days; but [illegible] is now considerably better: I earnestly wish, as you may suppose, that this *better* may continue, and that we may soon get her out of the scrape: you cannot imagine how much uneasiness her disorder gives me, and what sad vapours it has sent into my poor head, of which I cannot boast. You will, no doubt, learn the news of Britany to-day, from more quarters than one. The enemy's fleet presented itself before Brest, and wished to make an attempt: but two hundred men, who had embarked, were so warmly repulsed, that it is not supposed the fleet will risk a second attempt*: they were all killed or drowned; and it is affirmed that a nobleman of considerable consequence, who was at the head of the enterprise, was one of the first who perished. Langeron has done wonders upon this occasion. I doubt not that this attempt of the enemy has given more than one subject of uneasiness to our friends†, who are still at St. Malo; but if the report be true, that the fleet has raised anchor, they will not be sorry to see the troops of Normandy come to their succour: God grant they may have no occasion for them; for, as we know the husband and the wife, *it would be the devil to pay.* The abbé Têtu is as strange as ever; he has hired a house in New St. Paul's street. This, my dear governess, is all our news, at least it is all mine; for I only

* Besides this attempt which the English made unsuccessfully near Brest, they, in the same campaign, attacked Dieppe, Le Havre, and at length Dunkirk, where they again made the attempt with an incendiary ship, which they called the *infernal machine*. This method, which had miscarried the year before at St. Malo, failed also in 1694. We have recently seen that the lapse of more than a century has not brought it to perfection.

† M. and madame de Chaulnes.

know the subject of the piece generally. Madame de Villarci, who is here, knowing that I had just been writing to you, has desired me to say a thousand fine things to you from her; she is very attentive to madame de Coulanges, whom she loves more and more, and about whom she is very uneasy: I never saw a better woman, nor one more worthy of being beloved and respected. I was with madame de Lesdiguières yesterday, who at length gives me reason to hope for her picture; but it will not be with the accompaniments, like that which is sold in the snuff boxes. Has no charitable person sent you one to Grignan? Nothing can be more scandalous than this sort of box; and we are seeking for the painters with diligence, to punish them as they deserve. My very amiable governess, adieu.

LETTER *MXI.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, Monday, June 28, 1694.

Effect, effect your marriage; you are right, and the public is wrong, very wrong. If I had known that madame de Coulanges had told you all that was said, I should have been very cautious how I had repeated it to you; and if the letter you have written her had arrived two hours sooner, I should still have been very cautious how I mentioned the subject to you; all you have written to us both respecting it, is admirable, very true, and unanswerable: every one knows his own business best; "one has unharnessed in the morning, and the other in the afternoon†;" and whoever unharnesses is to be commended: it is a mark of sense, and of great skill; adopt therefore the party which suits you best;

† The termination of one of Coulanges's songs.

but will you confirm the public in its injustice? Make them give you a good round sum of ready money, that you may be at your ease: a large marriage-portion will justify your proceeding; draw, I say, as much ready money as you can, for this is the precaution that must be taken in such a case. The public says, and it is right, that we must not reckon with financiers for future wealth; and the public is convinced, and it is still in the right, that, peace being made, many will be so much pressed, that they will be ruined: take, therefore, all your measures well, and console yourself for an inferior alliance, by the comfort of having no more creditors, of being no longer dunned in your beautiful, grand, and magnificent mansion, by owing nothing to any one, and by the gratification of giving sometimes into superfluities, which appears to me the greatest happiness of my life. This, lovely lady, is all the answer I have to make you. Your letters are excellent, and it is a crime to make no part of them public; but as the public would not profit by them, I agree with you in the opinion of silence; they would be precisely *pearls before swine.* I have not, however, been able to avoid talking all this over with madame de Villeroi, who has good sense and a well-informed mind, and who dearly loves every thing that bears the name of Grignan; who esteems and loves you also; who feels herself obliged by your attention in sending compliments to her; who entreats me to return them to you a thousandfold, and in the best style; and who is, in short, enraged, like you, against the public, which is constantly in a rage without knowing why. She approves all your reasons, she praises you without end and without ceasing, and advises you to persist in your intention. One day, as you say with great justice, a thing is talked of, and the next it is forgotten; and when you present a pretty marchio-

ness de Grignan to the public, and the public is convinced that you have received a fine fortune with her, it will only bring persons of the first quality before its tribunal who have set you the example, and who do not now think themselves the worse for it. I have spoken my mind, and I shall resume the subject no more.

Madame de Coulanges has given you an account of herself, which is not now a very just one: she had a very bad night the night before last; but the medicines she is taking cannot cure her instantly, and we must have a little patience. The abbé Têtu must certainly die, for he can neither endure the person nor the conversation of Carette; and so great is his aversion to him, that he has deserted madame de Coulanges; because Carette comes to see her daily, and spends a good deal of time with her. Madame de Coulanges does not differ very materially from the abbé; but when life is at stake, *he can do little, that cannot do this;* and the abbé, who wishes to be master every where, wonders at madame de Coulanges, and, in his sleeve, takes it very much amiss that she does not get rid of Carette because he dislikes him: the abbé has also taken amiss, that she has put an orange-tree in blossom into her gallery: in short, he is a very extraordinary being; and I fear the transmigration he will, no doubt, some day make, in leaving St. Paul's, where he is now going to reside, will be to the neighbourhood of the Incurables, to soften the name of the place where he will probably retreat, and end his days. I have not heard of the Chaulneses since the affair of Brest, which has terminated very desirably for them. Wheat and barley are very scarce here, and diseases and deaths very common. La Péraudière, brother of M. de Valentiné, was taken ill and died within eight and forty hours; but

I am uneasy about another person, who is considerably indisposed, madame de Louvois; she has a little fever, and frequent shiverings that molest her; she has passed a very bad night; she has so much fear of being ill, that she will make herself so, and so much fear of death, that I fear she will die: the moment she is in the least unwell, it is the measles, the scarlet fever, the small-pox; in short, she is agitated with the constant apprehension of all these disorders: but can you guess what it is that gives me the most alarm for her? it is her immense riches, and the extreme happiness she enjoys. Madame de Coulanges has quite turned to-day towards the side of life; she finds herself much better than she has yet been. She has entertained Carette, marshal de Bellefond, and *the divinities**, at dinner; you will suppose that the abbé Têtu was not of the party; this is a fine proceeding of his. Carette still talks of setting out for Italy on Wednesday; but he promises his patient some drops, and tells her how she is to manage herself in his absence: to speak candidly, I am impatient to see madame de Coulanges restored to her former health, for more reasons than one. Adieu, my dear madam, this is a tolerably long letter. Continue your good offices to me with the inhabitants of your chateau, whom I respect, and take the liberty of loving according to their merits. I am highly obliged to the prudent Paulina for the two lines she wrote in your letter; I have many remembrances to make her on the part of the duchess de Villeroi, who never sees me without asking for her, and desiring me to say a thousand things to her in her name.

* Madame de Fromentiac and mademoiselle d'Outrelaise.

LETTER *MXII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES †.

Grignan, July 5, 1694.

You make me breathe again, by telling me that madame de Coulanges is much better; her last letter afflicted me to the highest degree. I am sorry that Carette has left her; I hope he has appointed marshal de Bellefond his principal assistant, to direct her in the course of her medicines. It is a sad thing to place our lives in the hands of a man who firmly believes he is going to take possession of a sovereignty in Italy: I beg you to give me the continuation of a history in which I take so much interest. I very much pity madame de Louvois with all her fears: this is one of the miseries attached to the blessings of life. You tell me nothing, my dear cousin, of yourself: think you, that your health and happiness are indifferent to me? M. de Grignan is in the neighbourhood of Nice, with a large body of troops, to repulse the fleet which was so ill received at Brest, in case of alarm. You know that the lieutenants-general of provinces are now lieutenants-general of armies, which delights them, though, at the same time, it is their ruin. We have still some persons here who are passable, and who play at ombre. We read, and sometimes remain in our own apartments: in short, the days glide on. Our little troop loves and embraces you.

† In this Letter madame de Sévigné's reply on the subject of her grandson's marriage appears to have been wholly suppressed.

LETTER * MXIII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, August 4, 1694.

I HAVE just been spending the most delightful fortnight in the world at Meudon; indeed, it is fairy land, and I shall never comprehend why the king will not enjoy the enchantment; for the house, with its vast extent, is much more calculated for him than for madame de Louvois; it is impossible not to agree to this. She also hopes that, peace being made, and plenty restored to the kingdom, the king will have Meudon † himself, and give her the means of obtaining a house near Paris, more suitable for her and the company she wishes to see, and less exposed to that with which she could very well dispense: I cannot think she is wrong. In the mean time I advise her to submit to circumstances, and to bear the inconveniences of Meudon with a good grace. She was even satisfied with this journey, because it brought her none but persons whom she wished to see. We returned on Saturday evening, to assist on Sunday in the pretty abbé de Villeroi's last act of philosophy, who acquitted himself admirably; and there were assembled a good and numerous company above and below, for the ladies now come to the acts; and madame de Villeroi gave a noble and magnificent collation to all those whom she had invited. But let us

† The king did indeed take it; but it was to give it to the dauphin. Mademoiselle de Montpensier had given him her house at Choisy. The king thought his son at too great a distance from him; and either from regard, or distrust, obliged him to take Meudon in exchange for it.

talk of other things. I had hoped, on my return, to find madame de Coulanges going on in the same way of amendment in which I had left her; she had even been at Lestang, at an entertainment given by M. de Barbesieux only a week ago, at which I had seen her, and from which she returned to Paris at two o'clock the next morning, without finding herself ill. It is true, madam, that instead of seeing her again with the same face, I found her wholly changed; which was occasioned by a return of her disorder, and an extraordinary drowsiness; notwithstanding which, Carette would have her bathe, which has reduced her to such a state, and has so weakened her poor stomach, that for the present he has suspended the bath, and even the drops. She has lost the power of digestion; the little she eats, without any appetite, returns again as it is taken; in short, she no longer knows where she is, and all those who have the care of her are greatly embarrassed. Must we continue Carette? must we discontinue him? must we knock at another door? must we go to Bourbon this autumn, without loss of time? in short, what must we do? We dare not give advice, because we dare not take upon ourselves the event; we are not however satisfied: after having passed three whole nights without closing her eyes, she at length slept for four or five hours during the last. I am sure this relapse will not please you; for she still finds as great a degree of flatulency as at first; which shows the inefficacy of all she has hitherto taken to dispel it. The abbé Têtu exults, and claps his hands; and this exultation serves only to displease and make us angry: for what other part can we take? Madame de Coulanges, however, is not without visitors; as she is sure to be found at home, all who know her come to see her; and every one gives his opinion, which, in my mind, is another

evil. It is saying every thing, to tell you that madame de Montchevreuil has spent two afternoons with her; and that madame le Tellier, the late chancellor's lady, of the age of ninety-six, passed the afternoon of the day before yesterday with her. I am sure you would not leave her if you were here. Madame de Coulanges desires me to say to you from her a thousand affectionate things. In the number of the visits she receives, you may suppose that madame de Créqui and madame de Villeroi are not deficient; it was therefore easy for me yesterday to show them the honourable mention you made of them in your last letter, and they have charged me to employ the strongest expressions I can use in proof of their gratitude, and in assuring you how much they are alive to these marks of your friendship. Madame de Créqui is very sore on the subject of Blanchefort; and you have omitted nothing that could be said upon the occasion to flatter her. Certainly, my dear madam, you have only to place all your remembrances in my hands; I shall make a very good, and a very free, use of them; for you know all my friends, male and female. I am not sure that I shall not go, to-morrow, to Pontoise; I yesterday received a very obliging summons from my worthy cardinal, and his ambassador gave me to understand that he could very well send a carriage for me this evening for the purpose. I shall be there only as long as the state of madame de Coulanges will permit it; for you can have no hesitation in believing, that her health will hence forth be the rule of my visits. This is my first duty, in which I shall take care not to fail; but she is herself desirous that I should go, alleging that her indisposition ought not to be considered as an illness, the termination of which can be easily seen: I shall consider it as such, but I shall act with caution.

We have had a quarrel with Carette, but the particulars would be too long to relate to you. He was included in a party to Vaugirard, with mesdames de Louvois, de Créqui, and Bernières; and madame de Coulanges had crammed into it a little madame de Séchelles, the friend of madame de Pezeux, a very pretty woman, with whom Carette had declared himself passionately in love. It was hoped that this passion would amuse the company, and every thing happened the reverse. Madame de Créqui went too far; M. de Barbesieux, who came in unexpectedly, appeared smitten with the little lady, purposely to make Carette jealous: in short, they carried the farce so far, that Carette returned to Paris in a perfect fury, calling madame de Coulanges infamous, affirming that she had only taken this young woman there to sell her to her cousin, and that mesdames de Louvois and de Créqui were excellent confidants. All this was so whimsical, that nothing else has been talked of at Paris; but you must suppose that the actors in the piece have only laughed at it, and that the ridicule has fallen upon *the marquis* de Carette; if he had been better known, he would not have been admitted into such good company. He was a long time without coming to see madame de Coulanges; but, at length, as she wanted to consult him, she sent father Gaillard to ask pardon for her; and *the prince* immediately appeared, having left all his resentment at the foot of the crucifix; but as madame de Coulanges relapsed after this *petoffe*, many persons think her rash in resuming Carette's medicines. This is a rough sketch of the piece, which has been a most ridiculous one. Would you ever have taken your friend for a vender of human flesh? and such confidants as those I have named, for accomplices with her?

Nothing new is going on here; and you are informed

of public, and many private, events, by the abbé Bigorré, and madame de la Troche. Madame de Bagnols, who set out on Saturday for Versailles, has fallen so sick there, that it has been necessary to bleed her in the foot with all possible expedition: this is very convenient to those who have lent her their apartments; but what business has she in that gallery? I send you her picture: can any thing be more laughable than this print, with her dogs, and her name engraved and spelt too plainly to be mistaken? This print has very much delighted madame de Coulanges: it was madame de Louvois who sent it me, and you will give it a warm reception. Adieu, my very amiable friend; a thousand affectionate remembrances, and a thousand respects, to you and all the inhabitants of the splendid mansion where you now are. I see your amusements, I see all your excellent society, and my mouth waters. The archbishop of Arles has sent me a very good and a very handsome reply, and I shall write to him immediately. It is now, it seems, M. de Carcassonne who is ill.

LETTER *MXIV.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, August 27, 1694.

I HAVE been passing three weeks between Pontoise and Versailles without baiting; in other words, without returning to Paris. You may hereby judge of the improvement in madame de Coulanges's health; for had it been in the slightest degree equivocal, you will suppose I should not have left her, and that my stay would not have been so long. I was highly pleased, on my return, to find her looking much better and grown fat-

ter; she does not, however, consider herself as well yet, because she has occasionally little returns of colic, and is not wholly free from flatulency, which seems disposed to establish itself in her stomach, and sometimes distends it very painfully; but, at length, she can eat, moderately, it is true; she has good nights, and she goes out, and receives company, as if nothing were the matter. This has succeeded to the melancholy state of which I gave you an account in my last letter: she has returned to Carette's drops, intending however to let some days pass without taking them; she is, besides, exempt from the frequent visits of the *marquis*, because he has himself been ill, and does not yet go abroad. I have not failed, my dearest madam, to read your letter to her; and she was very much gratified at the continuation of your friendship, and very much affected at the sentiments of the adorable Paulina, whose style and manner are so natural, that we are convinced her heart feels all she writes. Both madame de Coulanges and I, therefore, are very much obliged by all the pretty things she says; and we earnestly entreat you, lovely marchioness, to thank her and all the inhabitants of your splendid mansion, who have had the goodness to interest themselves about us. But let us return to our folds, for you like details, and I think you formerly wrote to me that this was the style of friendship. It was on a Friday morning, then, that a coach and six from the worthy cardinal de Bouillon's, took me from my own house, and carried me swiftly along to Saint Martin's, to dinner; where I found M. and madame de Croissi, mademoiselle de Croissi, madame de Saint Géran, and Richard Hamilton, who had been there from the evening before: my vanity was satisfied at the reception that was given to me; what excellent fare, what a house, what walks,

and what liberty! The Croissis went away on Saturday evening; but they were instantly replaced by the countess de Furstemberg, and mademoiselle d'Albret, a very pretty girl, second daughter of madame de Bouillon. On Sunday arrived M. le Grand—

MADAME DE COULANGES HERE INTERRUPTS HER HUSBAND'S LETTER.

It is I who arrive at St. Alexis, where I find an old child surrounded by toys, and contemplating his dolls with rapture: this child can read and write; he shows me that he has given you an account of all I had to tell you of my health; you will therefore hear no further tidings of it, my friend, by this post; but I will assure you of the lively gratitude I feel for your kindness to me. Perhaps I shall recover, perhaps I shall die; but in the mean time, my dearest, I shall love you truly. I am not insensible to the many civilities I receive from the inhabitants of the *palace of felicity*. M. de la Garde has a great share in my gratitude, and as for the adorable Paulina, I am charmed with her; to know how to say such delightful things as M. de Coulanges has showed me, is a treasure which I am indeed very glad is not hidden from me. Never was an absent person less forgotten than she is here; she is talked of, she is praised; and I say mournfully, "but remembering her is not seeing her." I love her strangely; I think I ought to ask her pardon for it, and I have even the confidence to hope I should obtain it. Marshal d'Humières is very ill; but marshal de Villeroi is in good health. My friend, did you never see a madame Berthier, beautiful and blooming, young and healthy? She was taken ill, and died in four days; and after this, reckon upon any thing in life as certain! I embrace

you, my dear, and I feel pleasure in scribbling a few lines to you, which perhaps you cannot read. I have just found another curiosity here; it is the looking-glass queen Margaret used at her toilet: the dressing-boxes are wanting, but they are to be sought for all over the world; it is of much use for M. de Coulanges to have the relics of queen Margaret!

M. DE COULANGES CONTINUES.

Well said; this is a fine scribble, and can a woman of reason and understanding spell thus? I am avenged for all her wicked jests on me, by the well-founded hope that you will not be able to read them.

On Sunday, then, *arrived M. le Grand*, madame d'Armagnac, with *the angels*, her daughters, mademoiselle de Bouillon, and madame de Baufremont; Monday, to dinner, the chevalier de Lorraine; and Tuesday, M. de Bouillon, the duchess de la Ferté, and Langlée: all these composed an excellent party to eat the cardinal's good things, and to make the pistoles fly about at lansquenet, as if they had not been of the value of fourteen francs each. There was a great deal of blood shed, but it was not lost; and he became gay who was melancholy before, as he became melancholy who was before in good spirits: forty and fifty pistoles were lost and won; in short, we had good cheer, and great play. We all separated, some a day earlier, some a day later; but on the Friday, the cardinal took me back to Versailles with madame de Saint Géran*, who thought the situation of Saint Martin very delightful. I was at Versailles from that Friday

* We have already spoken of this lady, who was the confidential friend of madame de Maintenon, as appears by the Collection of her Letters.

to the day before yesterday, in high glee; and, what is rare at Versailles, at full liberty; for, thank God, I see no one there but persons whom I wish to see, and those also who suit me. I have spent my time therefore with madame de Villeroi, who answers to your remembrances exactly as you could wish, and who tells me, like you, not to be sparing of words in expressing her sentiments for you; with the duchess de Villeroi, who often talks of the adorable Paulina, and wishes for her upon every occasion; with Saint Géran, *a beautiful pocket containing nothing*; with all of the name of Nouailles, Boufflers, Croissi; then with madame d'Armagnac, who has given me portraits of herself and her daughters; and with whom besides? with the duchess, the most gracious, and the handsomest princess that ever existed. I had free access there whenever I chose, and I told her that, notwithstanding the advances were made to me on the part of the other princesses to visit them, I would devote myself to her alone. In short, my dear governess, I kept quite clear of the vulgar; and I should not be returned now, if I had yielded to the pressing entreaties that were made me to stay longer at Versailles: but it was necessary to attend to the orders of madame de Louvois, who is preparing for a long journey to Tonnerre, and Anci-le-Franc, and who will take no journey without me; so that here I am. She says she shall set out without fail, on Wednesday next; but so many persons tell her that she is going into a bad air, and wish to divert her mind from this journey, that yesterday she seemed to waver. If she goes then, I go with her, and our correspondence will be interrupted for a short time; if she does not go, I shall not be very distant from Paris, and shall be within reach of still giving you an account of my movements.

The disgrace of mademoiselle Chouin has made a great noise at Versailles*: the princess de Conti had the politeness to assure mademoiselle de Sanzei that she had no interest in the subject that caused her to dismiss her. But what is this subject? It is upon this we reason, some in one way, and some in another; for if the dauphin ever loved any one, it was this girl. Has she been dismissed without his knowledge? The princess de Conti had some very private interviews with the king, which astonished every one, and this is what they have brought forth. Mademoiselle Chouin is at Paris, with madame de Lislebonne; and it is said that an apartment is preparing for her at the little Hospitalières.

You will hear the news of the army, which were brought yesterday by little Bontemps, from the abbé Bigorré; and I conclude by thanking you also for your details, and by entreating you to continue them. The

* M. de Clermont de Chate, of whom mention has already been made, pleased the princess de Conti; but he sought also to please mademoiselle Chouin, her maid of honour, and, what is still worse, he sacrificed the mistress to the maid. For this waiting-woman, though ugly, was a girl of sense, adored by the dauphin, and by her means they calculated on governing the prince. It is said, that it was in concert with a hero, marshal de Luxembourg, that M. de Chate carried on this double intrigue. Be this as it may, a packet of letters from this personage, addressed to the princess and the maid of honour, arrived from the army with the marshal's dispatches; and was placed in the hands of Barbesieux, secretary of state, who, like a faithful servant, carried it immediately to the king. We now easily comprehend the expulsion of Chouin, and the private interviews of the princess with the king, and even the equivocal terms in which she explained herself on the subject of her maid of honour. It must be remembered, that this princess was a widow, and singularly amiable; and as to mademoiselle Chouin, that, after this adventure, she was only the more certain of her ascendancy over the dauphin, who, in the end, privately married her. (See les Souvenirs de Caylus, les Memoires de Saint Simon, &c.)

dinner at Rochecourbière has made my mouth water; I see the enchanted spot from hence, and know its merit; nothing can equal your description of it. I condole with you, though rather late, upon the death of M. de la Fayette: his poor mother thought of nothing but of establishing his name and his family, at court and in the world, and it is now only supported by the shoulders of a little girl*. It is said that M. de la Fayette's will, made by the care, and during the life-time, of his mother, has consoled his wife and M. de Martillac, who were in great affliction before they saw this testament, which is very disadvantageous to the widow†. M. de Lamoignon will tell you all the particulars better than I can; they say, it is the work of the lieutenant of police. Adieu, my amiable governess; adieu, lady countess; adieu, divine Paulina, and all the worthy inhabitants of one of the most magnificent castles I know. God bless you all, and grant that we may some day meet again. Madame de Morangiés is very ill: madame Rénard de Rézé, our neighbour, is dead; and I have also heard of the death of one of my cousins d'Ormesson, who was a monk at St. Genévieve, and, I believe, your godson. In short, death visits all ages and all countries. Pray tell M. de Grignan, when you write to him, how much I respect him, and do not forget the good Marillac, nor the dean‡. You must have heard the tragical history of Hanover§. The court goes to Fontainbleau on the 15th of next month.

* Marie Madeleine de la Fayette, married afterwards to Charles Bretagne, duke de la Trémouille, first gentleman of the king's chamber.

† Madeleine de Marillac.

‡ Of the chapter of Grignan.

§ We find in a letter of the abbé Choisy's, dated January 1691, this passage: "The duke of Hanover has caused the prince Maximilian his son, who attempted to poison him, to be arrested." This refers to the consequences of that affair.

LETTER * MXV.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SEVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 1, 1694.

Adieu, my lovely governess, adieu, lady countess, adieu, divine Paulina, adieu, sir knight, and all the charming inhabitants of the palace of Apollo, adieu; I am this moment going to Tonnerre, and Anci-le-Franc; and I resign myself with submission to my wandering star, which does not lead me amiss. Madame de Louvois, contrary to the advice of the foolish people who opposed her journey, saying that a woman so rich and so happy as she is ought not to leave Meudon, has taken courage, and is setting out without listening longer to the flatterers of the court; yet, if she were to fall sick, judge of the confusion and repentance that would overwhelm us. But it is to be hoped that God will preserve us all in life and health; still it is true, that there is actually no air more unwholesome than that of Paris, where every one is ill and dying. The gospel of the day is, that marshal d'Humières died yesterday at Versailles; they delayed so long to tell him of his danger, for fear of alarming him, that it was at length necessary to have recourse to the bishop de Troyes, to turn his last moments to advantage, in which he received the sacraments: this is a fine subject for reflection. The public has already disposed of all the great situations he occupied: I know not whether the king will decide in the same way. I wish, at least, that the public may not be deceived in giving the artillery to marshal de Villeroi. His lady and the duchess followed the king yesterday to Marly: that seemed to me to be a good omen. The house of d'Humières is, besides, completely ruined;

never was there so total a defeat; the marshal's widow will literally not have bread to eat: another subject for reflection on bad management. Madame d'Humières*, who landed yesterday from her daughter d'Inenghein's, is retired to-day to the nuns de la Croix, in the faubourg St. Antoine, under the auspices of the abbé d'Effiat, who will be security for her with the nuns. Madame de Coulanges is tolerably well; she has sent her *marquis*† a gold snuff-box, weighing two hundred crowns, and costing ten louis, under the pretence that her snuff was better than his. The *marquis* has not even condescended to come and thank her for it, and has given out, that she has made him a present in which there is more invention than magnificence: he pretends to have given her two hundred and fifty pistoles' worth of bottles (of his elixir): never was there so unreasonable a man, and madame de Coulanges is fortunate in having got rid of him. I leave her with some satisfaction now that she is so much better. Adieu, my amiable governess: I shall be forty-five leagues nearer to you, and in the neighbourhood of Bourbilly‡, if I do not mistake; I shall perhaps find the woods of Chantal in my way, and the mention of them will give me pleasure. I embrace you, beautiful lady, with infinite affection. Continue to write to me when it suits you: I have desired madame de Coulanges to forward all your letters to me; do not therefore separate us, it will be useless, because hers will come to me after she has read them.

* Louis-Antoinette-Thérèse de la Chatre.

† Carette, her physician.

‡ An estate which belonged to madame de Sévigné.

LETTER *MXVI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES, WHO WAS AT THAT TIME AT ANCI-LE-FRANC, AT THE HOUSE OF MADAME DE LOUVOIS.

Grignan, September 9, 1691.

I HAVE received several of your letters, my dear cousin; there are none lost, and it would be pity, for they have all their particular merit, and are the delight of our society. Your superscription, on the last, in which you bade adieu to all by name, has given offence to no one: *Au Chateau Royal de Grignan.* This striking address gives us at least the pleasure of believing that in the number of beauties with which your imagination is crowded, that of chateau, which is by no means common, still holds its place, and it is one of its noblest titles: I must talk to you a little respecting it, since you are its admirer. The vile stair-case, by which, to the disgrace of the Adhémars, you ascended into the second court, is quite thrown down, and is superseded by one of the most agreeable kind imaginable; I do not say large, or magnificent, because my daughter having been unwilling to remove all the lower apartments, the space was necessarily confined, and there a master-piece has been effected. The vestibule is handsome, and makes a very comfortable eating room: you ascend to it by a large flight of steps; the arms of Grignan are over the door; you like them, and it is for that reason I mention it. The apartments of the prelates, of which you only know the saloon, are furnished very genteelly, and the use to which we appropriate them is delightful. But since we are here, let us talk a little of the cruel and continual entertainment

that is given, particularly in times like these; only the same things however are eaten here, that are eaten every where else; partridges, which are common enough; but it is not common that they should be all like those you meet with at Paris, when every one puts his nose close, and with a face of praise exclaims, "What a flavour! only smell!" We suppress all these astonishments; the partridges are all fed with thyme, marjoram, and every ingredient that enters into the composition of our perfume-bags; there is no choice. I may say the same of our fat quails, of which the thigh must separate from the body at the least warming, which it never fails to do; and of the turtle-doves, which are also superexcellent. As for the melons, figs, and muscadine grapes, it is really wonderful: if from any strange whim we should wish to find a bad melon, we should be obliged to send for it to Paris; no such can be found here: sweet white figs, muscadine grapes, like grains of amber, which you may devour till they almost intoxicate you if you eat too many of them, because it is like sipping the most exquisite wine of St. Laurent. What a life, my dear cousin! You lead such another under the less burning rays of the sun; it does not at all remind you of La Trappe. See what a detail I have fallen into, it is chance which directs our pens; I return you all you send to me, and which I so much admire: this freedom is convenient; we do not go far for the subject of our letters.

I highly applaud the courage of madame de Louvois in having quitted Paris, contrary to the advice of all those who wished to alarm her respecting the badness of the air: pray where is this bad air to be met with? who told them that it was not at Paris? We find it when it pleases God, and not before.

Tell me a great deal of your grandeurs at Tonnerre, and Anci-le-Franc. I have seen this noble chateau, and a queen of Sicily on a gate, from whom M. de Noyon proceeds in a straight line. You are fortunate indeed: on leaving the dignities of the duke de Chaulnes you are introduced into the abundance and riches of madame de Louvois: follow this beneficent star, so long as it will conduct you. I advised this, the other day, in a letter to madame de Coulanges. She has told me of Carette: oh, what a fool!

How can we pass from all this, my dear cousin, to marshal d'Humières, the most amiable, the most beloved, of all the courtiers? He said to the curate of Versailles: "Sir, you see a man who has only four hours to live, and who has never thought either of his spiritual or temporal affairs;" he said truly, and it is a truth worthy of reflection. But I quit this serious subject, to ask you in a different tone of seriousness, if I may not assure madame de Louvois of my most humble respects; she is so good, that she always gives us a desire to exercise this feeling towards her. Tell me who is of your party, and pay me with the money you have now in use. I am glad you are nearer to us, though it gives no greater hope; but still it is something. M. de Grignan is returned to Marseilles; it is the signal that we shall soon have him here. The fleet, which is near Barcelona, looks as if it would soon take the course which the season advises. All here love and embrace you, each according to his *pro rata*, and I in a greater degree than all. M. de Carcassonne is delighted with your letters.

LETTER *MXVII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Tonnerre, October 3, 1694.

It is shameful, it is horrible, it is infamous, that since I have been in your neighbourhood I have not given you the least intimation of life; yet Tonnerre and Grignan, Grignan and Tonnerre Anci-le-Franc and Grignan, Grignan and Anci-le-Franc, are all chateaux that may very well have some intercourse with each other without bringing disgrace upon any one of them, and without looking out at the doors to see which shall take precedence of the other. I have been a month at the states of madame de Louvois; indeed, they are states in the literal sense of the word; and they are pleasant states too, compared with those of Mantua, Parma, and Modena. The moment it is fair, we are at Anci-le-Franc; the moment it is foul, we return to Tonnerre; we hold full court every where, and every where, thank God, we are adored. When the fine weather invites us, we take long excursions to know the extent of our dominions; and when curiosity leads us to ask the name of this first village, "To whom does it belong?" the answer we receive is, "To *madame*." "And whose is that more distant one?" "It is *madame's*." "But in the valley yonder, that other which I see, whose is that?" "It is *madame's*." * "And these woods?" "They are *madame's*." "There is a large extensive plain?" "It is *madame's*." "And I perceive a noble chateau?" "It is Nicei, a considerable estate which belonged to the ancient counts of this name, and it is now *madame's*." "What is that other chateau, on an eminence?" "It is Passy, which belongs to *madame*,

and came to her from the family of Mandelot, by her great-grandfather." In short, madam, every thing in this country is *madame's;* I never beheld so many possessions, nor such a complete circle. Besides this, *madame* cannot excuse herself from receiving presents from every quarter; for what is not brought to *madame*, to prove the sincere joy that is felt at being under her government? All the villagers run to meet her with the drum and the flute; some present her with honey, others with chesnuts; while pigs, calves, sheep, turkeys, partridges, all the birds of the air, and all the fish of the sea, wait for her at the chateau. This, madam, is a slight description of the grandeur of *madame;* for she is called by no other name in this country; and in the villages, and every place through which we pass, we are saluted with cries of *Vive madame!* which must not be forgotten. But in the midst, however, of all this triumph, it must be said that *madame* is not at all elated; she is civil, she is polite, and we are quite at our ease with her. For myself, my elbows are wholly at liberty; but I am also a principal personage at her court. In addition to this, *madame* is in much better health here than at Paris; she breathes a good air, and the best proof of it is, that we hear of no complaint that can create uneasiness. She therefore intends to pass All-Saints here, and not to return till other great folks do. She is delighted at having only to keep herself quiet; and I see her serving her provincial noviciate with so much zeal, that it is almost certain she will make profession, and that scarcely an autumn will pass, when the court is at Fontainbleau, that she will not come to repose here, and innocently enjoy all the rural pleasures. We have not yet been dull a moment; for my part, I am so well, my good-humour and my appetite

are so completely returned, and my poetical vein is so thoroughly open, that there is no folly I do not take into my head, first to amuse myself, and then to amuse my neighbour; for well-ordered charity always begins at home. I must make you a party in our songs and masks: I enclose them. You will have the goodness to present them to the charming Paulina, and to join the chorus with her; it is thus I wish to reward you for the pleasing description you gave me some time ago of your dissipation at Rochecourbière; I never saw a better: and I have added the epistle to the former perfect ones, which I preserve in my treasury. We shall have no large party here from Fontainebleau, as we had hoped: the marshal's lady, and the duchess de Villeroi, are fallen sick at Paris, and have alarmed us; but our fear is at an end. Bad air, death, and diseases, are still prevalent there; but the principal thing for me, is, that madame de Coulanges appears to be out of the scrape; she visits and is visited, like any other person; and she applies herself so little to a holy life, that there is every appearance the physician will not visit her long: God grant he may not, and bless us all.

I hear from Paris that your marriage* is finally resolved upon; that M. de St. Amand is purchasing for his daughter a variety of dresses of the most magnificent kind, that you have had this little girl at Grignan, whom you have found still richer in perfections than in wealth, and that before you take her to Paris, you will keep her three years at Grignan to make her a prodigy. And who is it that tells me all this? Not madame de Coulanges; consequently it is the public voice: whether it says right or wrong, I leave you to decide. I

* Of the marquis de Grignan with mademoiselle de St. Amand

was delighted at the marriage of the little d'Ormesson and M. d'Aguesseau*; I never saw a more suitable, nor a more desirable, match. The first president has said all that can be said, that it was the alliance of merit and virtue. I have paid all your compliments to our *queens of Sicily*: the grandeur of the house of Clermont is displayed in every nook and corner of Anci-le-Franc; and I am always lost in wonder how it is possible to see so many beautiful and magnificent possessions go out of the family, without expiring with grief. M. de Louvois, with all his favour, deserves that this justice should be rendered to his memory: that he never entered upon one of the estates, which was not, as we may say, thrown at his head; there is no lord, great or little, that can reproach him with the smallest compulsion; and this may pass for a master-piece in the situation he held.

Adieu, dearest madam; believe still that I am not unworthy of the friendship with which you honour me, by the good and sincere affection which I entertain for you. Suffer me to walk through this royal chateau of Grignan, and, going from apartment to apartment, to pay my respects and homage to those who occupy them: it is not necessary to name them, you guess my intentions wonderfully well. I have only to mention the apartment of the good Marillac; indeed, I would gladly rejoin you, one and all, and I will not despair of doing so, that I may not die with vexation. Madame de Louvois received all your compliments very

* The same, no doubt, who was afterwards the celebrated chancellor of France. His father had quitted the intendancy of Languedoc, in which his courageous humanity had not been able to subscribe to the implacable measures of the court against the Protestants. But the new ministers, Beauvilliers and Pomponne, would not suffer him to be punished for his virtue.

agreeably, and has ordered me to return them to you with interest, and to entreat you to distribute some also from her to the beautiful countess, to the charming Paulina, and to all who bear the name of Grignan. I suppose you do not fail to weep heartily over all who die at Paris: you were apparently afflicted at the death of madame de Poissi, on account of M. de Lamoignon. We hear, from Fontainbleau, that poor little captain Saint-Hérem had a fall in hunting, and that his thigh is broken three fingers' breadth below the hip; this is a very dangerous accident at his time of life, and I am very much grieved at it. You have made noble reflections, in your usual way, on the death of M. Fieubet†; but adieu.

LETTER * MXVIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, October 4, 1694.

Your letter, my dear cousin, could not be too long expected; it has delighted us all; we have read it over and over again; we have sung your songs over and over again; and when M. de Grignan arrived yesterday from Versailles, where he had been on business, the first thing we did was, to read the letter and the songs once more. They found their place, after the first surprise he gave us was at end: for he had fallen on a step at Sorgues, and had bruised his nose so much, and his head also slightly, and was covered with such immense plasters, that neither *La Rapinière* nor *Le Destin*‡ ever wore more remarkable ones; but, convinced that it

† Formerly chancellor to queen Anne of Austria, a man of information and a pleasing poet. See the note, Letter 299.

‡ Characters in Scarron's Comic Romance.

would have no ill consequence, we resumed our mirth at your expense, and never did the beginning of a discourse captivate the auditors more agreeably. The chateau of *Anci-le-Franc, that of Grignan; Tonnerre, Grignan; Grignan and Tonnerre;* this equality, this balance, must equally please the living and the dead. After that, you represent to us, as in a mirror, the beauty, grandeur, magnificence, extent, of all these possessions, and then you exclaim, "How is it possible that the lords of such royalties could determine to part with them?" Alas! you give the reason yourself in one of your songs; it is because the hospital has long been attached to the noble house of Tonnerre: this is the true, and only reason; a reason which is incontrovertible; a reason which closes the lips; a reason, in short, which breaks through stone walls, which causes every thing to be madame de Louvois's, and makes it a fortunate circumstance to have found a minister rich enough to purchase such sovereignties, which you place with justice far above those of Parma and Modena. For myself, I can very easily comprehend the happiness of these people, weighed down with their own poverty and that of their masters, at finding themselves under the dominion of a woman of high rank, the granddaughter of Gilles*, and of the Mandelots, replete with merit, virtue, and wealth, to dispense on all occasions according to their different wants. What an advantage! what a protection! and how must it dispose them to cry *Vive madame* with their whole hearts! It is quite the country for making presents, and these presents will be returned to the givers with interest. Nothing can be prettier than all your conceits; the

* Gilles Souvré, marshal of France.

apparitions, the masks†, and the hero confined and preserved in an armoury with his descendants! My dear cousin, you have surpassed yourself, which is saying a great deal: but that little chapel of ease, at your bedside, which, no doubt, you have had measured, and which is sixty-three fathoms in length, makes us think of our chapter (de Grignan), which was supposed to be one of the finest in France. Do you know, that this chapel is like the church of Notre Dame at Paris. My daughter desires me to give you a thousand remembrances, and to assure you that she is delighted to find you again in good humour, and in the full enjoyment of your poetical vein. She entreats you, like me, to thank madame de Louvois for the honour of her remembrance. Paulina has assisted me in composing a tune for your delightful verses: she loves you with all her heart; and how is it possible, my amiable friend, not to love you? If you were so just as to love those who love you, I should fare well. All our troop return your remembrances double-fold: your name and your praises resound throughout this chateau; and why should you not return, so long as there are popes to make, and cardinals who will love you?

LETTER *MXIX.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Anci-le-Franc, October 29, 1694.

We are still at our magnificent chateau. Madame de Louvois has formed a taste for royalty and solitude, two very opposite things, which she was not acquainted

† The volumes of Amadis.

with: in short, hers is the taste of the great lords of the good old times, who thought themselves very well off at home, and whose ambition went no farther than to remain masters of the great possessions which their fathers had left them: they went to visit their sovereign from respect; but, their court paid, and this duty discharged, they were not sorry to find themselves sovereigns also, and to come and hold their own court in their turn. Madame de Louvois, satisfied, and justly satisfied, with her situation, has been so much pleased at a liberty she had never before enjoyed, and which it was impossible she should enjoy at Paris, or even at Meudon, that she is insensibly taken in for All-Saints, and I see her resolved not to quit her kingdom till the fifteenth of next month: for my part, I willingly obey her laws; and the more I know of her mild and pleasing administration, the more content I am to live wherever she pleases. Will you not acknowledge, after this, that my second marriage is a very happy one, and that you never heard of a more complying husband than I am, nor of a better-regulated house than ours? When madame de Louvois is at Tonnerre, it is all noise, all tumult, all the attributes of royalty; when she is here, it is not madame de Grignan in her chateau, exposed to an infinite number of neighbours, and the homage of all the Provençaux; but it is madame de Sévigné at her Rocks, reading, walking, writing to Paris, receiving letters, taking long walks into the country on foot, and, in short, leading a rural life, in all freedom and pleasure; a life, too, which madame de Louvois so much enjoys, that she forgets there are a Fontainbleau and a Versailles in the world.

We are just arrived from Tonnerre, where we have been to receive madame de Courtenvaux*, who cava-

* Marie Anne Catharine d'Estrées.

lierly and genteelly has left Fontainbleau post-haste, to come and place herself by the side of her mother-in-law; we have all been delighted to see her, and we do not cease to question her respecting the country she comes from: we make no stranger of her, and her company is a fresh amusement to us. On her arrival we did not fail to present to her the amiable Amadis, who is the best possible companion, and the most certain resource against ennui. We are going very prudently and rationally to spend the holidays here, and then we shall make a Saint Hubert, a little like that we made three years ago in the royal chateau of Grignan; with this difference, however, that if the beast escapes us, it will not have so far to fall. Madame de Courtenvaux has been receiving every sort of honour at Tonnerre; there were even a splendid ball and masquerades; she is therefore no more sorry than we are to be in quiet here, far from the world, and noise; for we have not even neighbours to worry us with their importunity.

Such, madam, is our situation; like reasonable beings, we are more to be envied than pitied. I am delighted that my last letter went through the journey so happily, without going to Paris, and it gives me courage to send this to you also by the same way. My vanity has obliged me to show yours to madame de Louvois, who was delighted with it, and took pleasure in reading it more than once; for, with the rest of her good qualities, she also possesses that of understanding good things; and, in reading certain letters, of giving them their proper tones. But where do you learn, my lady marchioness, that if the heir * to all these possessions had been married in a certain way, he might enjoy them still? Ah! is he not so married? will he not have mil-

* Francis Joseph, count de Clermont and de Tonnerre.

lions with his wife*? But it is because he was too eager to sell, and it is too late for him now to repent: it is because it was time for Anne de Souvré to appear upon this horizon, and that it was so ordained from eternity. It must be owned too, that the people of these cantons are happy in the change; for she has no anxiety but to relieve them, and to bestow her charity on those who require it the most.

But what is it madame de Coulanges tells me, of a report being spread at Paris, which she must explain to you, that your marriage is broken off? I am the more surprised at this, because, in your last letter, you mentioned it as a thing done; and you all seemed to be highly pleased at it. For my part, I should now be sorry if it were at an end; for, seeing the change that has taken place in these estates, I am of opinion that it is better, be it at what price it may, to retain what comes to us from our fathers, than to leave it to chance, founded upon a petty point of honour, which in time overturns the best houses; I am, therefore, most amiable governess, impatient to know the truth of this report, as taking more interest than any one in what concerns the family of Grignan. I entreat you to assure every member of it, of my respect and veneration; and you, my dearest cousin, to believe, that in honouring me with your good opinion, and, I will add, with your affection, you oblige one who esteems and loves you the best.

Madame de Louvois has received with pleasure all the praises you give, and compliments you pay her. She orders me to thank you sincerely, and to distribute also through your chateau many compliments on her part: she wishes me to send the prudent and rational

* Marie de Mauvillette.

Paulina three couplets, which I have added to the adventure of Gradafilée; suppressing the couplet I had made on the duchesses, her daughters, which renders the work much more complete. If you are not acquainted with Amadis, what I send will be Greek to you.

LETTER *MXX.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, October 29, 1694.

I was informed, yesterday, that your marriage† was again in train; that is, that conditions were sent to madame de Grignan, which she would be wrong not to accept: and as I suppose she cannot be wrong, I conclude the wedding will take place; and I rejoice with you, my dear friend, accordingly.

The king is at Choisy, where he remains till Saturday; all the world is returning in crowds; the army of Flanders is broken up. We shall not have madame de Louvois and M. de Coulanges till the 8th of next month; they have M. de Souvré and madame de Courtenvaux in addition to their society. Madame de Villeroi (la maréchale) is gone to spend the winter at Versailles, with her daughter-in-law; we thought we should be very sorry to separate. I have seen, madam, the most beautiful thing that can be imagined: it is a portrait of madame de Maintenon, by Mignard; she is dressed in the costume of Saint Frances. Mignard has embellished it; but it is without fulsomeness, without

† The marriage of the marquis de Grignan, madame de Sévigné's grandson, with mademoiselle de St. Amand, whom he espoused shortly after.

the lily, without the carnation, without the air of youth; and though all these perfections are wanting, he shows a countenance, a physiognomy, superior to any thing that can be said of it; animated eyes, perfect grace, no ornaments, yet the most beautiful picture that ever was seen. Mignard has also painted a very fine one of the king. I send you an impromptu madrigal of mademoiselle Bernard's, on seeing these two portraits; he has had great success here: you will judge whether we are right. Mademoiselle de Villarceaux is dead of the small-pox, without confession, and without having had time to disinherit her cousins. Madame d'Epinoi, the princess, is brought to bed of a son; and since that great day, nothing but firing and drinking is going on at the Place Royale. My dear friend, adieu.

LETTER *MXXI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE COULANGES.

Grignan, November 16, 1694.

I KNOW not, madam, where the letter, which I address to you, will find my cousin; it is full of trifles unworthy the accounts he gives us daily of his travels. I know not whether you remember your last letter, and with what grace and politeness you excuse yourself for having showed one of mine; and how you assure me, that since the world has seen none of them, it is a sign that I can have written none. I wish, my friend, I deserved all your encomiums on this subject; and I pity you for not receiving your own letters: this is all I can say. I believe nothing can now prevent us from concluding our marriage; in short, every thing is settled, and it appears to me that all the actors necessary to this ceremony will be assembled from every quarter

in a fortnight. M. de Grignan has had attacks of giddiness, which have alarmed us on account of his frightful fall: it was a miracle that his head was not dashed in pieces: it was three weeks after the accident that this giddiness showed itself; but we are assured that it is of no consequence. He sends you a thousand compliments, and a thousand after those: he said, the other day, that he would write to you, and I promised to inform you of it. Adieu, my dearest friend; when I do not name Paulina, it is not her fault, for she is always alive to you, and enjoys your wit and your letters in a degree which is meritorious to herself; she entreats you, not to forget her.

LETTER *MXXII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, November 17, 1694.

Here I am, safely arrived, and safely restored to my delightful apartment, whence I write, adorable governess, to you, to congratulate you on the marriage of the marquis de Grignan; which, I hear, is not only resolved and fixed, but perhaps by this time made and concluded. You are well assured that I wish you all every possible satisfaction; and my wishes are certainly the most sincere, since no one can be more interested than I am in all that concerns the good, illustrious, and ancient house of the Adhémars engrafted upon Castellane. God preserve to them *ad multos annos* their beautiful and magnificent chateaux; and may they, above all things, beware of building an hospital, for soon or late an hospital brings misfortune. I was right when I informed you that the church of Tonnerre was sixty-three fathoms long; it is said to be equal in

length to the church of Notre Dame, at Paris; but divine service is not performed there as at Grignan; no venerable chapel is there to be seen, like that which has caused me emotion every time I have beheld it, and given me equal respect for its founders. I arrived here on Saturday evening. Madame de Villeroi (la maréchale) is come to pay a visit to madame de Louvois, and I am going with her to-morrow to Versailles, and perhaps from thence to Pontoise, to give myself back to my illustrious friends. I know not when I shall return, which makes me write to you to-day, for your sake, and for the sake of all who are married and all who are unmarried, in the royal chateau where you reside; but as it is impossible to write one's exercise in so many ways, I put all my compliments into your hands to distribute them; and I entreat you to spare no terms to express every sentiment of my heart and soul. I am not satisfied with madame de Coulanges's health: I found her again with pains in the stomach, and just apprehensions of not recovering her former state; she continues Carette's medicines. God grant that she may benefit more by them than she has yet done; but I fear, from appearances, she will not be able to dispense with going to Bourbon in the spring. I am very uneasy respecting her; her situation interrupts the perfection of mine; for I am wonderfully well in body and in mind; though aware of the gout which seized me so unhandsomely last year, on the 20th of December. Adieu, my lovely friend; I am a thousand times more yours than my own. Madame de Villeroi (la maréchale) entreats you to suffer all her compliments to you, and those who bear the name of Grignan, to pass through my channel: she is not a *writer* from inclination; but she knows as well how to think and speak, as if she wrote. You ought certainly

to be satisfied with the manner in which she speaks of every thing that regards you, and with the warmth with which she takes up the follies and sayings of the vulgar.

LETTER * MXXIII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, November 19, 1694.

It is a fortnight, my friend, since I wrote to you; I inform you of this, lest you should not perceive it. I had not received your letters, which made me fear that you did not wish for any more from me. Are you at the wedding? Shall you be there soon? I wish to know what concerns you all, because I take a real interest in you. All the party from Tonnerre are arrived in perfect health. M. de Coulanges has been extremely mortified since his return: a printed book of his Songs has appeared, and at the head of this title an admirable panegyric of his person: he is said to be born as much for things solid as frivolous; proofs are given of the latter. He is very much hurt at the circumstance, and the more so from my not being able to take it seriously: to all he says, I reply, *Songs, songs.* He is gone to Versailles, and from thence to Saint Martin's; it is to be hoped that he will be consoled for this book by writing a second before his youth has passed away. You wish me to give you some account of my health: indeed, my friend, it is very far from good; Carette gives me what he pleases, and I swallow his medicines without confidence and without success; but I think it would be still worse to change my physician daily: I must have patience, and believe that we only die when it pleases God. I enclose you some verses, which

the abbé Têtu has desired me to send you; they are in his own style. A report prevails that the marquis de Moni will have Pipaut's house; it is said that he makes one of his footmen dress like a stag, and that he pursues him every night with a horn: what think you of this hunting-equipage? M. de Harlay is not yet returned from his negociations; every one wishes for peace, but has little hope of it. Here are more verses of mademoiselle Bernard's; notwithstanding all this poetry, the poor girl has not a petticoat to wear; but it matters not, she has paint and patches. Adieu, my dear friend; forget me not, I entreat you.

LETTER *MXXIV.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, November 26, 1694.

I SENT the letter you addressed to me for M. de Coulanges to Versailles, where he has been fixed since his return. I was very much tempted to open it; but discretion gained the mastery over the desire I always have to see what you write; in your hands, every thing turns to gold. I am extremely obliged to M. de Grignan for still remembering me: his fall really makes me uneasy, and I entreat you, my dear, to inform me of the state of his health, because I am sincerely interested in it. The verses I sent to court were very well received: the person to whom these verses were addressed, has written me the most delightful letter in the world; you will judge of it by its effect, when I tell you that but for my ill health, which makes it so unpleasant to me to remove from one place to another, I should be immediately set out for Versailles. I swallow Corette's drops incessantly; and all I know is,

that they do me no harm: there are few medicines of which we can say as much. To proceed: I went yesterday to see madame (la maréchale) d'Humières; she lives in a wretched house in the Faubourg Saint Germain, where there is no room, except in the court, for her to place her canopy. The duchess d'Humières, on her side, occupies another very small house in the Island. If the marshal's lady had a little courage, she would have given the preference to a convent, till something better offered. M. du Maine comes to-night to sleep at the arsenal; he is to entertain all the ladies who reside there to supper; the young madame de la Troche will shine, for she is the beauty of the place. Madame de Boisfranc has the small-pox, and so has the first president's son; in short, no place is free from it. I told you of the mortification of M. de Coulanges on the subject of his songs, which have even been ill chosen for publication: his eulogium is placed at the head of the book: this being the last misfortune that could happen to him, he has felt it as keenly as the captain did, who, after seeing his son expire, and losing the battle, with indifference bewailed only the death of his slave. Madame de Montespan is returning here; she has given a bed, worth forty thousand crowns, to M. du Maine, besides three other very magnificent ones. She has given her pearls to the duchess. Adieu, my dear friend; say a thousand things for me to all your beautiful and excellent society, and, above all, continue me in the good graces of the charming Paulina.

LETTER * MXXV.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, December 10, 1694.

A FORTNIGHT has elapsed without my writing to you; but I keep my excuses till I really write, for my letters can only be melancholy and dull. I am losing all my friends. The death of marshal de Bellefond† has given me real sorrow; the last visit he paid was to me; I saw him in perfect health, and six days after he was a corpse: his death, it is said, was occasioned by an abscess in the knee, and it is pretended that if it had been lanced, his life would have been saved; but you are not the dupe of this sort of repentance, we must go when our hour is come: the grief of his family is truly pitiable; for myself, I feel the loss most keenly. In addition to this death, I have to lament that of mademoiselle de Lestranges, who had been my intimate friend for twenty-five years: after this, you will not be surprised at the gloomy complexion of my thoughts. My health is very bad: Carette exercises his art on me in vain: he gave me a medicine, a few days ago, which made me very ill; but he said, as to Don Carlos, *It is all for your good*‡. I have some tolerable days, and then returns of colic more violent than ever; I am resolved to take no more medicine, but to live with this disorder as long as it shall please God: the worst that can happen, happens so soon, even with good health, that the event is not worth troubling ourselves

† Died on the 5th of December, 1691, aged 61.

‡ The expression made use of by the executioner, who was preparing to strangle this young prince, by the command of his pious and execrable father Philip II.

about; it is pain only that is formidable. You see, my friend, by the recital of my melancholy, the confidence I have in your friendship. I feel, however, the pleasure of knowing that you are all happy. The abbé de Marsillac informed me yesterday of the infinite wealth of M. and madame de Saint Amand, and of the marchioness de Grignan, their daughter; he saw them at Vincennes: he says they are the best people in the world, and that they have brought up a prodigy for you; in short, he spent a great deal of time in singing their praises to me; and I assure you I was not tired of hearing them, for I take a sincere interest in every thing which relates to you and yours. I ask you, as a favour, to give compliments from me to M. and madame de Grignan; I am too much out of spirits, and too ill, to write to any one but you; and you would, perhaps, willingly dispense with this preference. M. de Coulanges is still at court, where M. de Noyon* cuts a principal figure; he is the only one there at present, and the court is always in want of such an amusement.

* Francis de Clermont Tonnerre, bishop and count de Noyon.

We have already spoken of the extreme vanity of this prelate, in a note to Letter 73, March 11, 1671. What Lewis XIV. said on his reception at the academy, was pure irony. The abbé de Caumartin, who replied to him as a director, had the misfortune, or rather the pleasure, of seeing that every phrase of the grand eulogium he made on him appeared an epigram. The discourse of this abbé is curious, his jeers are very evident: his incense could deceive only the idol. We may judge by the following instance: After having observed that it was the king who wished M. de Noyon to be appointed, he added: "He knows your worth; he knows you thoroughly; he loves to discourse with you, and when he has spoken to you, a cheerfulness diffuses itself over his countenance, which is visible to every one." Notwithstanding the notoriety of the bishop de Noyon's folly, Dalembert has attempted to prove that it was overcharged: it is difficult to believe that the public in his time did not know him better than a panegyrist who wrote sixty years after him.

He will be received, on Monday, at the Academy (Françoise); the king has said he expects to be left alone on that day.

The abbé Têtu was here when I received your last letter; he was highly pleased at the reception you had given to his stanzas*; he sends you a dissertation on Montaigne. I must not forget, my friend, that I was obliged, a few days ago, in very good company, to say all I knew of the charming Paulina; my heart had so much share in the portrait I drew of her, that I really believe it resembled her; at least, it was said that such a person ought to be sought after from one end of the world to the other, by all the most deserving in it. I believe we shall have M. and madame de Chaulnes at the end of this month. Marshal de Choiseul has executed your orders: it is true, that I no longer see him; he says he has been told, that he made himself ridiculous by visiting ladies so often; I have suffered him to believe that he was not misinformed, and at length I am free from one visit a week. He has done wonders for poor marshal de Bellefond; he is the only one who has spoken to the king for the whole family. Adieu, my dear; always embrace the beautiful Paulina for my sake: how I abuse your good-nature, in asking things so hard to perform!

* The abbé Têtu had written religious stanzas on divers passages of the Scriptures, and of the Fathers.

LETTER * MXXVI.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, the last day of the year 1694.

I AM at length at the great city, where I have not made any long stay for these four months; for you know, madam, that since my return from Tonnerre, I have divided my favours, for six months, between Versailles and Saint Martin, where I have certainly led a very pleasant life; but, at length, here I am; we must give a little of our time to our *wives* and our friends at Paris, and not wholly forsake our relations and old acquaintances. Every one tells me, that I am in such good health, that my colour is so fresh, and that I am so young, that, *by St. John, I believe it.* In short, the 20th of December is past, and I am on my legs still, like any other person: it is pity that the season should be thus advanced; for if I could have foreseen so perfect a state of health when I was at Anci-le-Franc, *on my faith, on my sworn faith,* I would have taken the Lyons stage-coach by the way, and at the present moment should be singing, *Hymen Io, Hymen O!* Is it not true, my adorable Grignans, that you would have given me a hearty welcome to your magnificent chateau, and that you would have admitted me to your wedding? What are you doing? is it over? is the victim offered up? and has the sacrificer performed his duty well? must I pay my congratulations to you all in form, and separately? I believe, indeed, that you do not wish it, and that madame de Sévigné will have the goodness, when you are all assembled together, to read you this wretched letter; for the purpose of distributing, according to their ranks, all my respects, duty, services,

and most sincere attachment for the whole illustrious house of the Adhémars, engrafted upon the stock of Castellane, to whom I wish prosperity *for ever and ever.*

My lord marquis, we must have no trifling; we must speedily have a fine child of your own making, by which means you will raise your parents to the dignity of *grand:* for myself, I do not at all despair of seeing your children's children; and if I attain this happiness, I flatter myself you will have the goodness to present me to them, as having the honour of being the nephew of their great, great, great grandfather.

But, my lord count, how are you? do your giddinesses continue? I am indeed very uneasy respecting you, without however believing that any ill consequences can arise from a fall so long ago: in the name of God, take care of yourself, and let this serve as a warning to you, not to slight the assistance of an arm whenever it offers itself to support you; for my part, I am constantly hanging upon the arm of my equerry, and I find it very useful.

But, my amiable chevalier, must I always see you in the gout? it really drives me almost to despair. I have nothing to say to the gout; but I have tried a new remedy for my shoulders and my arms, which has succeeded wonderfully. You must, without any other ceremony, fold a piece of linen three or four times double, place it on the part affected, and then, with a hot iron, iron yourself as you would linen. I was last attacked at Versailles; I cried out, "My shoulder!" The irons were immediately put to the fire, madame de St. Geran's women-servants ironed me thoroughly, and I never since cried out "My shoulder!" This remedy I shall in future adopt for whatever is called rheumatism: the iron should not be too hot.

As for you, my lady countess, I am sure you are handsomer than ever: I pay you my compliments, and thank you for the excellent and entertaining letter you did us the honour of writing; you ought never to doubt that I approve every thing you approve, and that I am perfectly satisfied at seeing a daughter-in-law come into your family, of whom I hear such wonders: there are not two opinions respecting her pleasing figure, and her noble and polished manners, which do honour to her education. I am very impatient to have the honour of seeing you all together: but I must also make my bow to the illustrious prelates, and to M. de la Garde, and send them some little compliment.

To you, charming Paulina, I must wish a husband, and a husband worthy of you; in forming this wish, you will see plainly that I will no longer stand in your way; no, truly; I would rather lose my little finger, I have already told you so.

I now return to you, adorable governess, to thank you for having just read the above to your audience, and to assure you that I honour and love you more than my life. Now that I am at Paris, and that I shall be there some time, I hope we shall have frequent correspondence with each other; for, indeed, there are no means of writing in the country I have just left. I have put the whole house of Armagnac into my basket, which occupies me even now. Suffice it to tell you, that my last office was to escort the duchesses de Valentinois, de Villeroi, de la Feuillade, and mademoiselle d'Armagnac, to the play; that I made a fifth with them on the front row of one of the boxes; and that, to complete my happiness, the play was Cinna, with which I was more delighted than ever. What details, and what pleasing details, I have to tell you! But these must be reserved for another time; my letter is long

enough. Our Chaulneses are upon the road, and will be here immediately; their return is another motive for bringing me to Paris. Continue to love your little cousin, my dearest governess, and believe me to be a thousand times more yours than I can express. I will not conclude without saluting the dean at the head of his venerable chapter, without caressing mademoiselle de Marillac, nor without striking up a *croustillantes*, which shall resound at the four corners of the chateau. I must also add my thanks in this place for a pleasure which you have procured us, without knowing it. The chevalier de Sanzei, a very fine young man, and madame de Grignan's godson, is here; and not knowing where to lodge him, the abbé Bigorré has had the goodness to open the marquis de Grignan's apartment to us, which we have furnished, and have fixed him in it for the short time he has to remain in Paris; we thought you would approve this; he will not make much dirt there, as you may suppose, from the care we shall take of him by day. Adieu, my most adorable; when once I begin writing to you, I cannot stop. Madame de Villeroi (la maréchale) is not a *writer;* you must all therefore, as many as you may be, content yourselves with the compliments she has commanded me to give you, without haggling for terms, as if she had written to you individually; she takes your part with all and against all, and speaks very highly of you, and of every thing you do.

LETTER * MXXVII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, January 14, 1695.

I THANK you, my friend, for having informed me of the conclusion of your romance; for all you tell me is romantic. The heroine is charming; the hero we know; but it appears to me that you make more substantial repasts than these princes and princesses did. I am delighted that M. de Grignan is well; this circumstance has added much to the charms of the entertainment. I yesterday informed madame de Chaulnes of your marriage †, who is arrived in good health, and who exclaimed, "Good heavens! they are married then!" as if she had never heard of it before. She had slept at Versailles; she had seen madame de Chevreuse and all her friends there. It is impossible to be more occupied than she is with what has been told her of the death of M. de Luxembourg: if you, my friend, were here, she would certainly say: "Governess, he died like a Christian: Monsieur was almost constantly in his room." It is true, that father Bourdaloue has said, that he had not lived like M. de Luxembourg, but that he wished to die like him. Madame de Maintenon is well; she has been much indisposed; she now goes out daily, preparatory to her journey to St. Cyr. I had a visit, yesterday, from a modern Andromache. Madame (la maréchale) d'Humières appointed M. de Tréville and the abbé Têtu to meet her yesterday in my chamber; she informed me that she no longer saw the duchess

† The marriage of the marquis de Grignan and mademoiselle de St. Amand.

d'Humières: who could have believed that interest would have occasioned such a disunion?

It is reported here that the princess of Orange† is dead; but this news wants confirmation. The poll-tax is at length passed, and fixed. I have always forgotten to give the abbé Têtu's compliments to you, and to the whole house of Grignan. Adieu, my dearest; I embrace, I love you, and wish for you always. M. de Coulanges lives wholly at court; it will not be said that he is led by interest, whatever country he inhabits; it is always his pleasure that governs him, and he is happy: what more is necessary?

LETTER *MXXVIII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, January 21, 1695.

Be assured, madam, that we no longer recollect that there was ever a M. de Luxembourg‡ in the world. I pity you for being where you are, only on account of the reflections which you give yourself the trouble of making on the dead, who are here already forgotten. M. de Luxembourg's best friends often assemble still: their pretext is, to lament him; and they eat, drink, laugh, are merry, and "of Charon, not a word." This is the way of the world, the world to which we are so fondly attached. The princess of Orange§ is scarcely mentioned, who was only thirty-three years of age, was handsome, was a queen, had power, and died after

† Mary Stuart, daughter of James II. king of England, and wife of William III. king of England, who was at that time only known in France by the name of the prince of Orange.

‡ Who died the 5th of January, 1695, aged 67.

§ Died the 7th of January, 1695.

three days' illness. But the greatest news is, that the prince of Orange is ill, very ill: the disorder of the queen was contagious; he did not quit her an instant, and God grant she may not have quitted him long!

A beautiful and magnificent scene took place yesterday, at the hôtel de Chaulnes. Monsieur spent almost the whole of the day there, with his usual goodness and agreeable manners to the mistress of the house. The duchess's apartments are in the highest style of perfection; from the saloon to the closet, every thing is furnished with those beautiful damasks, embroidered in gold, with which you are so well acquainted: in the bedchamber a chimney-piece, of inexpressible beauty and magnificence, has been erected; there were large fires throughout the house, and so great a quantity of tapers, that the sun would have been obscured if they had contended together. Madame de Chaulnes went this morning to return Monsieur's visit, and afterwards to Versailles for a few days, which has prevented her writing to you. There are no pleasures but at Grignan, my friend; but the worst is, that there are none for us at Paris when you are at Grignan. I revere and esteem all the inhabitants of that beautiful chateau. The marquis de Grignan has written me the prettiest letter in the world: it has been deemed so by connoisseurs. Render me every good office in your power with his lady, but particularly, my friend, with yourself, I entreat you. The amiable Paulina is daily spoken of here, and all her friends remember her so affectionately, that she is an ingrate if she cares no longer for them; provided however she does not forget me, I pardon her all the rest. The little duchess de Sully, who is in my opinion the old woman, has just desired me to give you a thousand remembrances from her. Continue to love me, my dear friend, I conjure you.

LETTER *MXXIX.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, January 21, 1695.

Good heavens, my dear governess, what excellent letters you write, and how much pleasure do your details give me! I have seen the wedding as distinctly as if I had been present at it; I have seen the beautiful chateau illuminated, the company that filled it, the splendid dresses and ornaments of the bride; the three sumptuous tables served in the gallery; all the apartments richly furnished and lighted. I have even heard the music; in short, your entertaining accounts have made me lose nothing, and have relieved me from the anxiety I felt at that time to see the tables served in the gallery. I thought the place very cold, but the two chimneys, of which you make mention, have warmed my imagination; and the only inconvenience I experienced at this nuptial feast, was from eating too much; for never did I meet with better cheer. You have indeed acquitted yourself admirably in these details; but who will inform me whether we have really a marchioness de Grignan, and whether we may expect nephews worthy of their ancestors? Let me be assured, at least, that the marquis's wedding-night was not like his father's, and I shall hold it as certain. With respect to myself, I still lead the same life, most amiable marchioness: sometimes at Versailles, sometimes at Paris, and always in good company. At Paris, I divide my nights between my two *wives*; for I spend as many in the neighbourhood of Richelieu†, as in Tournelles-street: I have

† At the hôtel de Louvois.

often been detained by the horrible weather we have had, for it was really dangerous to venture into the streets, particularly at night.

The good Chaulneses are at length here, just the same as you have always seen them, and still disposed to give entertainments to their friends: their house is wonderfully improved; and the duchess, who is always so much averse to any alterations that are proposed, is constantly delighted when she finds them done, and is the first to approve them. Monsieur, with whom you know she is so great a favourite, came to see her yesterday, and paid her the most agreeable visit in the world. Madame de Coulanges was invited to assist her in doing the honours; and she did not fail to go, as you will suppose. I was not at the hotel de Chaulnes when Monsieur was there, because I dined in the faubourg St. Germain; but I arrived soon enough to find very handsome fires in all the chimneys, and every mark of a rich house, where they know how to live in style. Monsieur went also to see madame de Rohan, who has lately lain in; and the dowager princess d'Epinoi, who has been ill.

The death of the princess of Orange is a subject of never-ending discourse: even yesterday there were persons who betted that she was not dead; be this as it may, the king, her father, has resolved to receive no visits, and to wear no mourning. Mademoiselle d'Hocquincourt is to marry the marquis de Feuquières; and madame de Bracciano* gives little balls, which are over at ten o'clock; at which all the heiresses that are candidates for husbands assemble, and it is who shall dance with them? This is all our news. I am now

* The duchess de Bracciano was afterwards the celebrated princess des Ursins, who governed Spain under Philip V.

going to dine at the hôtel de Chaulnes; the husband and the wife are going, after dinner, to Versailles. I am earnestly solicited to go to Saint Martin's, and I know not whether I shall not go on Sunday with the duke de Montmorenci, who has led the cardinal to hope that he will bring me there: it is an excellent house to be in, at all times and seasons. Adieu, my most adorable; I thank you for having so ably distributed my compliments; I entreat you to go on, and to be assured that no one in the world is more devoted, or more affectionately attached, to you than I am. Madame d'Armagnac has sent me her portrait, and those of her two daughters †; you will suppose that it was necessary to give them a place; but be not alarmed for your own portrait, it still occupies the same station, and has a stronger hold in my heart than it would have in iron or brass. Madame de Coulanges is tolerably well: she begins to eat more heartily than she did.

LETTER * MXXX.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE COULANGES.

Grignan, February 3, 1695.

Ah! talk to me not of madame de Meckelbourg ‡; I renounce her: how, in the name of God, and even of humanity, could she keep so much gold, so much silver, so much furniture, so many jewels, in the midst of the extreme distresses of the poor, which, of late, have been overwhelming? But how must she appear in the eyes of the world—the world, whose esteem and ap-

† The duchess de Valentinois, and mademoiselle d'Armagnac.

‡ The beautiful duchess de Chatillon, sister of marshal de Luxembourg. See the note, Letter 36, December 20, 1668.

probation we wish to preserve beyond the tomb? How could she bear to be thought the most avaricious of beings? avaricious to the poor; avaricious to her servants, to whom she has left nothing; avaricious to herself, since she almost starved herself to death; and in dying, when she could no longer conceal this horrible passion, to appear, in the eyes of the public, avarice itself? My dear madam, I could discourse for a year upon this subject; I abhor this phrensy of the human mind, and it is a personal insult to me to abuse it as madame de Meckelbourg did: we loved one another very much formerly, we called each other sisters. I renounce her; let her name be mentioned to me no more.

Let us talk of our hôtel de Chaulnes, which is precisely the contrary: these are adorable people, and make a worthy use of their wealth; what they receive with one hand, they dispense with the other; and if they had no ingots of gold at St. Malo's, they would abridge themselves to support the high station in which God has placed them. The poor feel their liberality; in short, they are people who cannot be too much loved, and honoured, and admired. I am so fascinated with them, that I even give the credit to M. de Chaulnes of having taught friendship to Monsieur; it is a science which persons of his rank have not often the happiness of knowing. I am glad not to be forgotten in this hôtel; I entreat you, my amiable friend, not to forget me yourself. Paulina embraces you, and can no longer dispense with your kindness. We are still engaged in wedding-visits: the ice gave way with mesdames de Brancas, and mesdames de Buous, ladies of consequence, whom we had desired not to come: they were on the point of falling through it, and were in danger of their lives, in coming to congra-

tulate us: this is the way in which people love in this country; is it the same at Paris? I, however, am satisfied, at least; and I swear to you, that I shall have real joy in receiving you.

LETTER * MXXXI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Paris, February 3, 1695.

MADAME de Chaulnes sends me word that I am fortunate in being here in the sunshine; she thinks all our days are woven with silk and gold. Alas! my dear cousin, it is a hundred times colder here than at Paris; we are exposed to every wind; it is the south wind, the north-east wind, it is the devil; it is who shall insult us; they fight among themselves, which shall have the honour of confining us to our apartments. All our rivers are taken; the Rhone, the furious Rhone, cannot resist them; our writing-desks are frozen, our benumbed fingers can no longer guide our pens; we breathe nothing but snow; our mountains are charming in their excess of horror: I wish every day for a painter, who could take a good representation of these frightful beauties: such is our situation. Relate it to our good duchess de Chaulnes, who fancies us to be in meadows with parasols, walking under the shadow of orange-trees. You have formed an excellent idea of the rural magnificence of our wedding†; every one has shared in the praises you bestow, but we know not what you mean by the wedding-night. Alas, how coarse you are! I was charmed with the manner and modesty of the evening; I informed madame de Coulanges so: the

† The marriage of the marquis de Grignan.

bride was conducted to her apartment; her toilet, her linen, her night-clothes, were brought; she took off her head-ornaments, was undressed, and went to bed; we knew nothing of who came in, or went out of, her room; every one retired to his own apartment. We arose the next morning, without going to the bride-folks; they also arose, dressed themselves: no foolish questions were asked them; Are you my son-in-law? Are you my daughter-in-law? They are what they are. No gay breakfast was prepared; every one ate and did as he pleased; every thing was conducted in silence, and with modesty; there were no uncomfortable looks, no confusion, no improper jests: this is what I had never seen before, and what struck me as being the most becoming and the pleasantest thing in the world. The cold freezes me, and makes the pen fall from my hands. Where are you? at St. Martin's, at Meudon, or at Baville? What happy spot contains the youthful and amiable Coulanges? I have just been railing against avarice, to madame de Coulanges: it gives me great joy, from the riches madame de Meckelbourg has left, to think I shall die without any ready money, but at the same time without debts; this is all I ask of God, and is enough for a Christian.

LETTER *MXXXII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, February 15, 1695.

It is evident that you have forgotten the climate of Paris, my friend, since you believe that it is colder with you than with us; never was there a winter like this. The sun has showed himself for these two days, but he does not suffer himself to be felt, which is a

privilege you enjoy at Grignan, I am certain. I can easily understand that madame de Grignan takes a pleasure in dispensing with visits; this is an advantage I enjoy in the centre of Paris; but I have no reason to trouble myself with them; I have no children, no family, and, thank Heaven, no taste for these fatiguing occupations; I have old age, and sufficiently bad health: all this confines me to my chimney corner with a pleasure which, for my own part, I prefer to apparently greater ones. But one retreat I admire, which is that of mademoiselle de la Trousse; God bestows on her a great portion of grace, and her situation is now enviable. Madame de Chaulnes is constantly wishing for rest, and is always on wing. She gives magnificent dinners: the chevalier de Lorraine, M. de Marsan, the cardinal de Boüillon, are of her parties, and this is the case every day of the week. Madame de Pontchartrain is much indisposed; the countess de Grammont is returned to court in excellent health. Madame de Meckelbourg is only remembered by her avarice. It is said, that M. de Montmorenci is to marry madame de Seignelai; I can scarcely give credit to this marriage. M. de Coulanges arrived yesterday from St. Martin's and from Versailles; but he alighted at the door of madame de Louvois *: *honour to whom honour is due.* I can easily comprehend that we may reconcile ourselves to a husband who has many wives; and I wish M. de Coulanges had one or two more like madame de Louvois. Marshal de Villeroi took the oath yesterday †, and afterwards the staff: he made the king wait a long time, while he was dressing; he had a blue velvet coat of extraordinary magnificence, and

* M. de Coulanges called madame de Louvois his second wife.

† For his situation of captain of his majesty's life-guards.

his fine countenance set him off more than his coat. The duchess du Lude has made me promise to give you a thousand compliments, and a thousand affectionate remembrances from her. The king has given madame de Soubise the apartment marshal d'Humières occupied at Versailles; madame de Soubise's, to the princesses d'Epinoy; the princesses', to M. de Rasilly; and of the duchess d'Humières, not a word. Adieu, my dear friend, I embrace and love you heartily. I fear the charming Paulina will forget me at last; absence leaves us every thing to dread, even when we are happy. Continue, I entreat you, to distribute my compliments through the chateau de Grignan. I am very much obliged to the chevalier (de Grignan) for the honour of his remembrance, and I conjure you to thank him for me: I am truly interested in his disorder; his friend, father de la Tour, preaches at St. Nicholas; and, if I am able to go out, he shall be my preacher during Lent. All the sonnets written in praise of the princess de Conti, have no doubt been sent to you†.

LETTER * MXXXIII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, February 22, 1695.

I HAVE lost my little secretary, my friend, and I cannot bring myself to show you my vile writing. I am trying a new secretary ‡; let me know if you can read

† This can only be understood ironically. The adventure of M. de Clermont Chate, and of La Chouin, gave rise to numerous epigrams against the poor princess. Many of these vile ballads were by the duchess de Bourbon, the daughter of madame de Montespan, as the princess de Conti was of madame de la Vallière.

‡ M. de Coulanges.

his. The news which makes the most noise here, is the marriage of the beautiful Paulina; it is said that the abbé de Simiane is gone to be present at the wedding; when I say I know nothing on the subject, no one will believe me. The duchess du Lude says she has heard it from the chevalier de Grignan; for myself, I pardon the secrecy you have observed towards me, provided it be true; you will therefore suppose that I passionately love M. de Simiane.

The duke de Chaulnes gives magnificent dinners; he has given one to madame de Louvois, as he would have given to M. de Louvois; another to the chevalier de Lorraine, and the whole house of Monsieur; I was at the first, and sent M. de Coulanges to the second: in proportion as my age increases, his diminishes; so that I think myself almost too old to be his mother. All the courtiers are become poets; nothing is to be seen but bouts-rimés, some as full of praise as others of slander; God forbid I should send you any of the latter: there is one in praise of cardinal de Bouillon, which passes for a song; what say you to it, my friend? What say you, also, to the *prince dauphin?* I leave this story to be told you by my secretary; for he pretends sometimes to write, in his way. The marriage of mademoiselle de Croissi with the count de Tillières* is said to be a fixed thing. Madame de Maintenon is still languid, but she is in much better health. Madame de Grammont appears at court with the figure of a new beauty; she is perfectly restored.

The abbé de Fenelon appears surprised at the king's

* This marriage did not take place. Mademoiselle de Croissi was married in 1699 to the marquis de Bonzoles; and in the same year, the count de Tillières married mademoiselle du Gué Bagnols, madame de Coulanges's niece.

present* to him: in returning him thanks, he told him he could not consider a favour which removed him to a distance from the duke of Burgundy as a reward: the king said that he did not intend to oblige him to constant residence; and at the same time, this worthy archbishop pointed out to the king, that by the council of Trent, prelates were only allowed to be absent for three months from their diocese, even in business which concerned their personal interests; the king represented to him the importance of the education of the princes, and consented that he should live nine months at Cambray, and three at court; he has given up his only abbey. M. de Rheims has said that M. de Fenelon, thinking as he did, had done right in this; and that he, thinking as he did, had done well to keep his. Adieu, my dear friend: your absence is still insupportable to me, let me not be forgotten in this chateau de Grignan; it is your business, I remind you of it. I affectionately embrace the charming Paulina. Mademoiselle de l'Enclos is as much in request by women as she formerly was sought after by the other sex; is it possible not to hate old age after such an example? The abbé and the chevalier de Sanzei set out yesterday to keep Lent with their mother; the latter will do all he can to make a bow to his godmother †, in his way to his ship.

M. DE COULANGES CONTINUES.

First, madam, how do you like this small paper? Does it not interrupt you sometimes in your reading? For my part, I prefer the good old-fashioned paper our

* Of the archbishopric of Cambray.

† Madame de Sévigné.

fathers used, in which there was plenty of room for details. It is a week since I returned from St. Martin's and Versailles, to pass the rest of the flesh-days at Paris. Nothing can equal the excellent and sumptuous dinners at the hôtel de Chaulnes, the beauty of the state apartments which daily increases, and of the fires in every chimney: this house, in fact, is the only one which truly represents the house of a great lord. M. de Marsan and the duke de Villeroi were at the dinner of the chevalier de Lorraine.

As I have not heard cardinal de Bouillon on the subject of the *prince dauphin*, I cannot answer to you for the truth of this circumstance; but it is affirmed that Monsieur, pressed by the cardinal, had consented to detach the dauphinial principality of Auvergne, from the duchy of Montpensier, in consideration of the pretensions which the house of Bouillon might have over the succession of Mademoiselle; so that by that means they were masters of the whole of Auvergne; for the cardinal has the duchy, and M. de Bouillon the earldom; and, in the end, the duke d'Albret would be called the *prince dauphin*: as the persuasion is, that there is nothing too warm for the cardinal, who is occupied solely with the grandeur of his family, what is not said of this folly? It is true, that Monsieur, who had promised every thing, spoke to the king respecting this division; and that the king opposed it*. It is said, that

* After the imprisonment of the princes, under the minority of Lewis XIV., when the party of the great Condé decided to have recourse to arms, it was to Auvergne that the princess, his wife, immediately repaired. A curious detail of the magnificence with which she was received there by the duke de Bouillon, of the forces he assembled, and of the sovereign power he exercised, may be found in the *Memoires de Lenet*. The remembrance of such a circumstance was sufficient cause for the king to take umbrage at the new plan of the family of Bouillon, which is mentioned here.

the cardinal, still afflicted at this refusal, has written to the chevalier de Lorraine, to tell him that he was much surprised that Monsieur had not kept his word with him, and that he could not henceforth be one of his servants. It is added, that the chevalier de Lorraine has showed his letter to Monsieur, who has kept it, and says, that the chevalier ought at least to be obliged to him for not having showed it to the king. Be this as it may, madam, it is very disagreeable to our cardinal; for as he is not universally beloved, his enemies take advantage of the opportunity to give vent to their malice, while his friends are grieved that he does not, once for all, put an end to his ambition, and accommodate himself to the present times. Judge, after this, of the success of the bout-rimé which madame de Coulanges has mentioned to you. It is a long time since I wrote to you; but I hear of you always by madame de Coulanges, who sometimes has the goodness to communicate to me the contents of your letters. I always forget to give madame de Louvois's compliments to you, and to the whole house of Grignan; she scolded me very seriously, the other day, for my omission.

LETTER * MXXXIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO MADAME DE COULANGES.

Grignan, February 26, 1695.

I SHOULD be consoled for the little secretary † you have lost, if the one ‡ you had taken in his place, could attach himself entirely to your service. His writing is very good, his style excellent; but from the way in which I have heard him spoken of, I should

† The count de Sanzei. ‡ M. de Coulanges.

think it probable that he would be every moment playing truant: he is a libertine; I even know that he sometimes sleeps in town; after this, my friend, you may employ him, if you please. I advise you to take him upon trial; when you find him under your thumb, make him useful; *tant tenu, tant payé* (so much labour, so much pay). Our hôtel de Chaulnes is the only one that preserves the dignity of the nobility: they (the duke and duchess de Chaulnes) are in the habit of enjoying their wealth; they both do what is now rarely done; they are worthy of the highest esteem and friendship. God preserve their health, the golden rain of St. Malo, and the youth of your amanuensis: I must now address myself a little to him.

TO M. DE COULANGES.

In the first place, my dear cousin, I must tell you candidly, now that we are left at liberty, that I do not at all like madame de Coulanges's diminutive sheets*; they enrage me, I quarrel with them every moment; I know not where I am. They are the leaves of the Sibyl, they fly away; and I cannot forgive them for keeping back, and interrupting, my friend's conversation; but you must say nothing to her about it, for she is attached to this small paper. I wish you were as much attached to her service: it is a good situation to be her amanuensis, I like it much; your writing has given me real pleasure. I know all the wonders of the house of Chaulnes, and am grieved not to be a witness of them: if I could have made an alteration in the ar-

* Madame de Coulanges commonly wrote on small-sized paper, cut on every side.

rangements which cause me to be here when they are at the Place Royale, I would have done it with pleasure. I love and honour cardinal de Bouillon; you can praise him in prose and in verse; I wish his fancy, with respect to the succession of Mademoiselle, could have been realised. We are informed here of the magnificence of your duchess de Villeroi; of her superb dresses for the last days of the carnival: she is at the age to like all these things. Have you not given the compliments of this whole chateau to marshal de Villeroi and his lady? I requested you to do so. We shall receive compliments from madame de Louvois with extreme pleasure; she is a person whom I particularly respect: she is polite, she is obliging, and this is all I require of her. You have had deplorable weather, and so have we; extreme cold, and volumes of snow, which I need not tell you; severe frosts upon the snow, and then more snow, and rain freezing as it fell: in short, we have been a thousand times worse off than at Paris. I conclude, my amiable; I have no pretty details to give scope to in this paper, and I would lay a wager the wind would carry away my letter; it is your turn to speak. Corbinelli tells me wonders of the excellent company of men he met at the house of mademoiselle de l'Enclos; thus she assembles both men and women in her old age, whatever madame de Coulanges may say; but if she had now only women to visit her, she might comfort herself for the arrangement, having had visitors among the other sex at a different period.

LETTER *MXXXV.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, Wednesday, March 4, 1695.

IT appeared by the last letter you received from your friend †, that her secretary was not always at her command. All you say on the libertinism of this secretary, is as incomparable as it is true. I only returned from the house of my *second wife* ‡, where I had slept for two nights, on Wednesday morning; I returned to assist at the Wednesday's gala at the hôtel de Chaulnes. The duke and duchess live well every day; but on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, I cannot sufficiently praise their good cheer: their house-steward is an excellent one, and contributes greatly to their splendour. But is the company always select? Judge, madam, by the sample of last Wednesday: the *Divinities*, who are always amusing; madame de la Sale, and her daughter de Roussillon; madame de St. Germain; madame du Bois de la Roche, who laughs louder than ever; and the good abbé d'Effiat, for whom principally the entertainment was given. I would have sworn, at first, that I should be contented to eat merely to live; but the dinner was so excellent, so large, and so magnificent, that I seasoned it with my best humour; I ate like a devil, drank like a fish, and made madame de la Sale, her daughter, madame de St. Germain, and madame du Bois de la Roche, agree with me, that there was nothing like a select company, from the same country, who all speak the same language, and who were all delighted to meet: they must also agree, I said,

† Madame de Coulanges. ‡ Madame de Lavois.

that any one, be it who it may, that arrived unexpectedly, would be an interruption to our party; and they were of opinion that the master and mistress of the house should be scrupulous of admitting any but such persons at their dinner-hour, and that nothing was so mortifying to good company as to meet with bad. Upon this subject, madame de la Sale said a thousand clever things, every one more delicate and more truly French than the rest; madame de St. Germain applauded them with her usual air of confidence, and madame du Bois de la Roche laughed louder than ever; the dirty spoons at the same time resounded upon the plates, to help one, and to help the other; and having unfortunately wished for a sea-dragon, madame de St. Germain put one of the finest on my plate: but it was in vain to say I would have no sauce; the same lady, assuring me that the sauce even surpassed the fish, covered it at different times with sauce from her own spoon, which was just taken from her lovely mouth; madame de la Sale helped nothing but with her fingers; in short, I never met with so much dirt; and our good duke, with the best intentions in the world, was dirtier than the rest. Thus, my lovely governess, passed our entertainment. I am going again, as soon as I have finished this letter, to dine with the duchess de Chaulnes, for the duke will not arrive from Versailles till the evening: but the splendour of to-morrow is destined for the first president of Britany, his son, his daughter-in-law, madame Girardin, the bishop of Vannes, his sister madame de Creil, and others: I am also retained to assist in doing the honours.

Mademoiselle de Bréval * was married on Wednesday

* Geneviève Françoise de Harlay, daughter of Bonaventure François de Harlay, marquis de Bréval, and of Geneviève Fortia.

to M. de Thianges; and, as M. de Thianges heard some proposals for going to the opera till supper-time (for the marriage took place in the morning, and the dinner was at the archbishop's of Paris), he requested that some other amusement might be chosen: accordingly the wedding-party was conducted by M. du Maine to the Arsenal, where the gates were shut, and the company played at lansquenet till the hour of supping with the first president arrived; at whose house the bride and bridegroom remained till to-day. They are now at the hôtel de Nevers, where they will remain for three months, that is, till they can find a house that suits them. Madame de Montespan opened her doors yesterday, and received, in bed, the compliments of all who wished to pay them to her. This is the great news of the day. The duchess de Villeroi is with child, and very melancholy at a situation which is new to her, while all her family are delighted at the event. The count de Sanzei arrived yesterday; he only waits the orders of madame de Coulanges to show you his writing; he will be with us but a fortnight, at farthest, for the drum is going to beat again to arms: You have heard of the death of madame de Montglas*: in return, the countess de Fiesque is better than ever; she has been wonderful on the marriage of mademoiselle de Bréval, whom she has always loved and considered as her daughter. Cardinal de Bouillon's affair is no longer spoken of; I have seen him frequently of late, and he appears to me as tranquil as it is possible to be. The hôtel de Chaulnes, with all its glory, is not without its occasional mortifications, because the duke and

* This lady is known by the passion with which she had inspired Bussy, and by the complaints he wrote in prose and verse, reproaching her with having forsaken and even betrayed him in his misfortunes.

duchess are not without them: all these troops on the coast, and the officers that command them, embarrass them, when they ought to accommodate themselves to the times, spend the spring quietly here, and divide the summer between Chaulnes, Versailles, and Paris, and not go to Britany till the meeting of the States: but they conceal every thing from their friends, and will shorten their days by main force. The good duke is very much out of spirits, and with reason; but who, in this world, does justice to himself?

This has insensibly grown into a tolerably long letter; it is, at least, written on old-fashioned paper, which does not fly away like your friend's. This friend of yours set out early this morning, to attend father Gaillard's sermon at St. Roch, and from thence she is to go to madame de Valentiné's to dinner. Adieu, my dearest madam; continue to love me, and believe that I love you neither more nor less than myself. The marchioness de la Trousse is going to join our society again; she has desired madame de Coulanges to introduce her in certain houses; she intends also to write to you. Say, I entreat you, a thousand fine and good things for me to all the inhabitants of your chateau royal. I am very impatient to hear good news from the adorable Paulina: we hope to have some from you, independently of what we may receive from other quarters. We merit this distinction, from the sincere interest we take in all that regards her.

LETTER * MXXXVI.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, March 25, 1695.

My secretaries fail me in time of need; but when it is to you, my dear friend, I write, my fingers are always disposed to the office, "*they move only for Climena.*" What say you at the duke de Chaulnes being no longer governor of Britany? Nothing is talked of but this great event; moderate persons think this duke and duchess ought to consider themselves fortunate in the change †; others think they must be in despair at it; for myself, I say whatever they wish, and am convinced that we must not judge of our friends' way of thinking by our own: this, however, is a fault which the world always falls into, and which it is impossible to avoid; it is less trouble to judge by our own dispositions than to examine those of others. M. de Chaulnes carries it off well; the duchess conceals herself so carefully, that I have not seen her; it is indeed easy enough to escape me, for I am naturally slow; and I make less speed than ever, in the hope of advancing in the road of perfect indifference, which you, my dear, will never be able to perceive. Besides, my health is not at all good; it is of more consequence than ever that I should go to Bourbon; the will of God must be done. When I reflect that ten or twelve years, more or less, make the only difference in this affair, I do not think it worth while to treat it so seriously; perhaps, when I find myself nearer death, I shall think

† The government of Britany was given to the late count de Toulouse, and that of Guyenne to the duke de Chaulnes.

otherwise; we must deal plainly with the name, if it be only to accustom ourselves to it.

I expect a compliment from you, which I am sure will be a sincere one, on the event of the fire: this seemed to be an opportunity for bringing the whole world to me; but the world is frivolous, I have carefully avoided it.

Madame de Villars has made me promise that I would say a thousand things to you from her; particularly that I would inform you that she will [illegible]: the give M. de Villars for not having spoken o[illegible] dame de Grignan; this may lead to a separation, if your daughter does not take care to prevent it. Now I am finishing my letter, one of my secretaries is arrived; he will inform you that I have just seen M. de Chaulnes, who has related to me all that passed between the king and him; but as he has told me, at the same time, that he is going to write to you, I shall not embark in a recital which you will learn much better from himself; this appears to me very reasonable. The duchess has sent to ask if she might spend the day with me; I pity her, because she is grieved: I, who have no taste for representation, or rather who have no taste but for rest when youth is past, should not complain if I were in madame de Chaulnes's place. M. de Mêmes is to marry mademoiselle de Brouë, who is to receive a portion of a hundred and fifty francs in silver, and fifty thousand in clothes and jewels. It is also said, that M. de Poissi is to marry mademoiselle de Beaumelet*, who will some day have an income of sixty thousand livres a year; *and of my poor niece not a word.* M. de Coulanges arrived yesterday from St. Martin's, and he is

* M. de Poissi did not marry mademoiselle, and it was not till 1692 that he espoused mademoiselle de Varangéville.

gone to-day, I know not where. Marshal de Choiseul set out on Sunday; he has the command of Britany added to the rest: as he has so noble a command, I am not sorry that he is at a distance; not that I am ungrateful, for I have scarcely seen him this year. Adieu, my true friend; let me not be forgotten at Grignan, especially by the adorable Paulina.

LETTER *MXXXVII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, April 15, 1695.

I HAVE not written to you since the strange adventure of our fire, and it is a long time ago: I ask you a thousand pardons, most excellent lady; but you must excuse a man who is never at home, and whose mind is always on the stretch, as I formerly said to your son, who was reproaching me for the same thing. As soon as I had shared in the disaster of our poor furniture, I returned to Versailles, and from thence to Pontoise, whence I returned merely to pass the Easter fortnight at Baville; but I have received a hint to hold myself in readiness to go to Chaulnes towards the 24th or 25th of the month, to remain there till Whitsuntide. I doubt not that some one or other will lay hands on me in the interval; and it is thus my days pass insensibly, and that I take advantage of an after-crop of youth, which makes me accommodate myself still to the world, and the world accommodate itself still to me. I know not what is become of the gout, I have not heard of it since last year; and my strength, and my health, and my good-humour, are so completely returned, that I am almost ready to believe there must be a gross error in the certificate of my baptism, and

that the register must have been wrong by at least twenty years; for certainly, at the age of sixty-one, no one is so young as I am. You are young too, my dearest; I have never seen a firmer hand than yours, nor a more exquisite style; your letters give me real pleasure; madame de Coulanges carefully preserves for me all those you write to her, and I should never be tired of perusing them.

You have known, and have seen with a telescope, all that has taken place at the hôtel de Chaulnes; the more we look forward, the more fortunate the zealous friends and servants of the duke and duchess think them in having got out of the scrape so nobly as they have done: in short, they are the greatest lords in France, their affairs are in the best train, and they have the pleasure of hearing their praises sung on all sides; for from Britany we hear that they have assisted many persons at their own expense, when too severe rules have been exacted by the States, to keep back the little douceurs which maintained many decayed gentlemen and poor families. In short, our duke and duchess are excellent people, God bless them; but let them beware of going into Guyenne from uneasiness, for if they go they are lost. No offence will be given if they stay away; but if they once go, they must remain there for ever; and what expenses must they incur, and what spirits will they have to govern!

There is no great news stirring. The archbishop of Rheims thought to have purchased Colbert-house; and M. de Beauvilliers, first tutor of the children, and authorised by the consent of the archbishop of Rouen and madame de Seignelai, thought to have sold it; but the latter having changed their mind, M. de Beauvilliers and M. de Rheims, whose conduct has been irreproachable, have been disappointed. These are the only

things talked of, according to the interest that is taken by either party. I was with madame de Nevers the whole of yesterday morning, and I returned to her again in the evening: this is to show you that I have not forsaken her; but, for all this, it is certain that we see less of her than of any other person, because the life she and her husband lead is still the most retired, and even the most extraordinary.

My beloved governess, adieu. I am going to dine at the hôtel de Chaulnes, where the noble duchess will arrive after dinner. I am not satisfied with the health of madame de Coulanges: she is now deep in the medicines of Helvetius; God grant that they may be of more service to her than those of Saint Donnat and Carette. I do not like to see her running from quack to quack; she appears to me like a person who has lost her way, who seeks the right road and is unable to find it. Keep yourself well, my lovely: it is certain that I am less uneasy about you at Grignan, than if you were here; because I know that you want for nothing where you are, and that you have every thing there which you like best. I see M. de Sévigné as often as I can; he is still my child.

The incendiary was called *Beauvais*, a waiting-maid whom madame de Coulanges had lately taken in the room of the *Belle de nuit*; this woman displeased her from the moment she came into her service; she was also hated by the whole house; but your friend had never the courage to get rid of her, because she was recommended by a darling penitent of father Gaillard.

LETTER *MXXXVIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, April 26, 1695.

When you write to me, my good cousin, I am delighted; your letters are as agreeable as yourself; they are read with a feeling of pleasure that diffuses itself over every thing; we love to hear you, we approve, we admire you, every one according to the degree of love he bears you. When you do not write to me, I neither scold nor pout; "My cousin, I say, is in some enchanted palace; my cousin is not at home; my poor cousin is no doubt run away with;" and I wait with patience the return of your remembrance, without ever doubting your friendship; for how is it possible not to love you? It was the first thing you effected when you began to open your eyes; and it was I who set the fashion of loving you, and thinking you worthy of being loved: so well-conditioned a friendship has nothing to fear from the injustice of time. It appears to us as if time, who does so much harm in passing over the heads of others, had done no injury to you: you know nothing of your register; you are convinced there is a great error in the date of the year; the chevalier de Grignan says, that what has been taken from yours, has been added to his; and he is right: it is thus his age must be calculated. For myself, who have yet no warning of the number of my years, I am sometimes surprised at my health: I am cured of a thousand little indispositions I formerly laboured under; not only do I advance slowly, like a tortoise, but I am

almost tempted to believe that I move like a crab: I endeavour, however, not to be the dupe of these deceitful appearances, and in a few years I shall advise you to do the same*.

You are at Chaulnes, my dear cousin; it is an enchanted spot, of which M. and madame de Chaulnes are going to take possession; you will there find the children of the little nightingales whom you have so prettily celebrated in your songs; they ought to redouble theirs, when they learn from you the happiness they will have in seeing the owners of this beautiful place more frequently. I have followed every sentiment of these good governors, and I have not found one which has not been in its place, and which has not taken its rise in good sense and the most perfect generosity. They have felt the lively grief of a whole province, which they have governed and loaded with blessings for twenty-six years: they have obeyed, however, most nobly; they had need of their courage to subdue the force of habit, which had, as it were, united them to Britany; now they have other thoughts: they enter into the taste of quietly enjoying their greatness; I find nothing that is not praise-worthy in the whole of this conduct; I have traced it, and felt it with the interest and attention of a person who loves and honours them from the bottom of her heart. I have informed our duchess how M. de Grignan stands at Marseilles, and in this province, without any sort of dissatisfaction; on the contrary, it appears by the orders of marshal de Tourville, that he has been considered in every thing: the marshal is to ask him for troops when he wants them; and M. de Grignan, as lieutenant of the army, will command the marine forces under the mar-

* Within a year she was no more!

shal. This is the principal concern in this world: we wish to act, cost what it will. I pity my son for having lost the pleasure of paying his respects to our ancient governors; he feels this loss as he ought to feel it. I am uneasy respecting madame de Coulanges, and am going to write to her. Receive the friendship of all who are here; and come, that I may kiss both your cheeks.

LETTER *MXXXIX.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, May 13, 1695.

I AM much better; Helvetius † has given me only an extract of wormwood, which seems to have restored my stomach: I assure you, my dear, that I am far from being indifferent to my health, and that I bear my pain with very little patience; I will not, therefore, take to myself a merit which I do not possess. I believe that, if I had thought of spending the interval between the seasons for taking the waters, at

† He was the grandfather of the celebrated author *de l'Esprit*. He came from Holland to Paris very young, to practise medicine. Chance, and not his merit, though he had considerable merit, made his fortune. He attended and cured a drug-merchant, who paid him with a packet of the root of Brasil called ipecacuanha. After some experiments in the hospitals, Helvetius found that it possessed the virtue of curing the bloody flux. The public soon learned by his success that his specific was really sovereign; and, before the end of thirty-two years, dysenteries had brought him in a hundred thousand crowns. The king gave him a thousand louis for his secret. His talents, from that time fully proved, acquired him great fame, which equalled that of his son, who was also a skilful physician. Both have enriched their profession with valuable works. But the genius of philosophy has since raised the name to a higher degree of glory.

Grignan, I should have considered them necessary to my health; and I think that if I had once got there, I should have preferred the wines of Grignan to those of Bourbon. I very much pity the chevalier de Grignan; and I am ashamed of complaining of the little pain I suffer, when I see him endure such torture with so much patience. Poor madame de Carman is very ill; we shall see the end of her life, before the end of her patience.

Good heavens! let me hasten to give you compliments from M. de Treville; he scolds me every day for having forgotten it; he sincerely wishes for your return. He told us, the day before yesterday, the finest things possible on the subject of Quietism, that is, by explaining it to us; never was there so enlightened a mind as his. M. Duguet*, who is not much of a fool, as you well know, upon such subjects, was in raptures at hearing him. Let us talk of other things. The princesses are here, and amuse themselves so well that we are assured they are not at all impatient to return to court. They go to bed commonly towards eleven o'clock in the morning, or at noon. Langlée gave a supper yesterday to M. and madame de Chartres, the princess, the duchess, who was the queen of the feast, madame de Montespan, a great number of other ladies, among whom were madame (la maréchale) de Villeroi, and the duchess de Villeroi; the duke, and all the princes who are in town, were also there. But there was another entertainment given, two days ago, by the duke, in madame de la Sablière's cottage: all the princes and princesses were present; this house is become a little palace of crystal. Do you not find

* The celebrated abbé Duguet.

that these are holy places to infidels*? Madame de Montespan has purchased Petit Bourg for forty thousand crowns; she gives it, after her death, to M. d'Antin. M. de Sévigné leaves us the day after to-morrow; he assures me that he shall meet you this winter at Paris; this makes the winter appear very long to me, notwithstanding the beauty of the season. M. de Chaulnes will return the 17th of this month, but our duchess not till after the holidays. M. de Coulanges sends me word that the more spring he has, the more he feels the spring: this is a great wonder; for, without offence to him, he has more spring than madame de Brégi. I entreat you, my dear, to say a thousand things from me to madame de Grignan, and to embrace the gentle Paulina very affectionately for me: it is said that you will bring her back married; I already feel that I shall not love her the less. M. de Luxembourg's funeral oration will be ready for printing in two days: it is said that a few features have been taken away from the portrait of the prince of Orange †. Madame de Grignan will have the pleasure of receiving affectionate letters from her husband, and of writing some to him: it is right that all her sentiments for him should develope themselves. Adieu, my dear.

* On account of the extreme devotion of M. de la Sablière, to whom this house formerly belonged.

† The court began to feel that the prince of Orange was not a despicable enemy, and peace was already thought of, which took place two years afterwards. The Jesuit la Rue, author of this funeral oration, had orders to soften the war of words, expecting that something better would happen.

LETTER * MXL.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, May 28, 1695.

I HAVE received your two letters from Chaulnes, my dear cousin; we found some verses in them that delighted us; we have sung them with extreme pleasure, and more than one person will tell you so, for you must not be ignorant of the good taste we preserve here for every thing you do. With respect to the gaiety and charms of your mind, you certainly advance, and go back with respect to your register: this is all that can be wished, and is what naturally lays the foundation of the desire every one has for your society. To whom are you not welcome? with whom do you not accommodate yourself? and then, which is best of all, your conduct in not obtruding yourself, and in allowing room to the wish of seeing you, gives the true relish to your vanity. The proverb must be forcible indeed, if it be true that you are not a prophet in your own country. I often receive news from madame de Coulanges: her correspondence is very entertaining, and her health ought no longer to create alarm, especially having the resource which we must have, that when she is tired of medicine, and undeceived with respect to it, the most salutary remedy will be to take no more.

But to return to Chaulnes. I know its beauty, and can discern from hence how dull our good governor is there. It is in vain for you to give the best reasons in the world; he will constantly answer, "I do not know:" and if you go on, he will silence you by saying, "I shall die." This is what will happen, no doubt, till he has acquired a taste for repose, and for the charms of

a quiet life: habits are too strong, and the agitation attached to command and to a high station has made too deep an impression, to be easily effaced. I wrote to this duke upon the deputation of my son, and I jested with him, saying things I did not believe respecting his solitude at Chaulnes; I treated him like a true hermit, holding conversations with the beautiful fountain called *the solitary*. I supposed his repasts suited to his situation, and that dates and wild fruits would compose all his banquets; I pitied his house-steward, and in saying all these trifles, I found that I stood in great need of you; and that the braying* I know him to possess, would make strange work with my poor letter. You came to my assistance, as I supposed you would; and you are now in another country, where you feel all the delight of paternal love; what say you? you could not have believed it to be so strong, if you had not experienced it: it would have been great pity if all the good instructions you have given to little children, had not been followed by some child of your imagination. The little count de Nicei is a master-piece†, and the singularity of being invisible makes him superior to the rest. You make so good a use of this story, that I scarcely dare recall you: you have immortalized it; nothing can be prettier than these couplets, we sing them with pleasure. We have had a delightful introduction of spring; but, for two days past, the rain, which we do not like here, has been as violent as in Britany and Paris, so that we have been accused of having brought it into fashion; it interrupts our walks, but it does not silence our nightingales; in short, my dear cousin, our

* M. de Chaulnes read as ill as M. de Coulanges read well.

† The whole of this pleasantry is explained in some songs of M. de Coulanges to madame de Louvois, and turns upon a story which had come to them from Provence.

days pass too quickly. We dispense with great bustle, and with the great world; our society, however, would not displease you; and if ever a puff of wind should blow you to this *royal* chateau—. But this is a chimera, we must hope to see you again elsewhere in a more natural and probable situation; we have yet a summer before us for writing to each other.

The marriage of M. de Lauzun has surprised us*; I should never have guessed it on the day I wrote to you respecting another marriage†, when you were at Lyons: madame de Coulanges remembers it still. Every one here loves you, and thanks you for your remembrance. I write to you imprudently, without considering that you are no longer at Chaulnes, and that in another country all this will be nothing. I must conclude with Paulina; she sings your praises in singing your songs; she still loves you, and desires you to give her acknowledgements to the duchess de Villeroi; it is impossible to forget a pretty friend. Adieu, cousin; you know how much I am yours.

Postscript of Madame de Grignan.

All your children are charming; those we see, bear away the palm from those we do not see; and however perfect the count de Nicei may be, from whom you seem to take your Benjamin, we cannot believe that he surpasses the pretty children you send us, and which we sing with so much pleasure. I cannot believe that in all your works any thing can equal the idea of con-

* To mademoiselle de Lorges. This marriage was an arrangement made by ambition. With a large fortune and high rank, Lauzun's mania was to become a favourite once more. He could not succeed.

† That is, when the marriage of M. de Lauzun to Mademoiselle was spoken of.

verting to use "Do you see him?" "no;" "no more do I." As the original of this story is Provençal, you owe me a tribute for every thing you compose from this model, of which the copies very much exceed it. I see with pleasure in your letters to my mother, the remembrance you retain of our *Rock;* the epithets with which you honour it†, are eternal monuments of glory to the Adhemars; if their chateau merits in your opinion to rank with all the superb, magnificent, and singular ones you have seen, no panegyric can be so great as this. It is more beautiful than you have ever beheld it; and if we had the hope of seeing you in it again, we should wish for nothing more.

LETTER *MXLI.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, June 3, 1695.

How are you, my dear? I have not heard from you since the letter you caused to be written to me by your handsome secretary. I fear you have injured your charming health by medicine. I saw M. de Chaulnes yesterday, who is a perfect courtier: he has been ten days at Marly, where he spent his time playing at chess with cardinal d'Estrées, and when he was told that it was news here, he replied that he was surprised at it, because he had long sought to give himself check-mate. Another piece of news is, that madame de Louvois has given up Meudon to the king, who has taken it for Monseigneur, giving madame de Louvois four hundred thousand francs and the charming house of Choisy, which was what she most wished for; I fear she can

† The royal chateau.

have no more desires to gratify. She is very much dissatisfied with M. de Coulanges, who, on arriving from Chaulnes, set out the next day for Pontoise. For myself, I have no taste but for rest. I have been desired to go to cardinal de Bouillon's this week; this seemed to me exactly like asking me to walk to Rome; I find I must have cogent reasons to be induced to quit my bed; be assured it is ill health which makes me think thus: I am, however, much better than I was. I am not satisfied with that of madame de Chaulnes; she has a wretched cold, which I do not at all like. I believe the sale of Ménilmontant is broken off, so much so that, from all appearances, the first president will not now part with it. Adieu, my dear: let me not be forgotten at Grignan, I entreat you, and tell the beautiful Paulina to think sometimes how much I love her.

LETTER * MXLII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Grignan, June 5, 1695.

I INTEND, sir, to bring an action against you: and thus I set about it. I wish you to judge it yourself. I have been here for more than a year with my daughter, for whom I have as much love as ever. Since that time you have no doubt heard of the marriage of the marquis de Grignan to mademoiselle de Saint-Amand. You have seen her often enough at Montpellier to be acquainted with her person; you have also heard mention of the vast wealth of her father. You are not ignorant that this marriage was solemnised with great pomp in the chateau which you know. I suppose you cannot have forgotten the time when the true esteem we have

always preserved for you began. On this subject, I measure your sentiments by my own, and I judge that, we not having forgotten you, you cannot have forgotten us.

I even include M. de Grignan, whose date is still more antient than ours. I collect all these things, and I find myself injured on every side; I complain of it here, I complain of it to our friends, I complain of it to our dear Corbinelli, the jealous confidant and witness of all the esteem and friendship we bear you; and at length, sir, I complain of it to yourself. Whence proceeds this silence? is it from forgetfulness? from perfect indifference? I know not which to say: what would you have me think? What does your conduct resemble? Give a name to it, sir; the cause is now ready for your sentence. Pass it: I consent that you should be both party and judge.

LETTER *MXLIII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MESDAMES DE SÉVIGNÉ AND DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, June 10, 1695.

Your last delightful letter fell into the midst of Saint Martin's; and as it was not closed against my charming cardinal, who has taken the place of, and gone beyond, the charming marquis, it furnished ample materials for talking of the mother and daughter, and for discoursing again of the royal chateau, and of the good and magnificent reception you there gave this cardinal on his return from Rome. In speaking of you, madam, how often did we wish you at Saint Martin's! We even placed you in a superb calèche, that we might show you the walks and all the beauties of the country with greater convenience; but alas! it was in vain we asked, *do you*

see them? no, was the reply, and we added mournfully, *no more do we.* We gave you also a very good supper; and it was at supper, in the enthusiasm of veal, beef, and mutton, which were in the highest degree of excellence, that I wrote this triolet, which I thought obtained your approbation.

Quel veau! quel bœuf! et quel mouton!
La bonne et tendre compagnie!
Chantons à jamais sur ce nom
Quel veau! quel bœuf! et quel mouton!
Roti, soyez exquis et blond,
Mais mon appetit vous oublie;
Quel veau! quel bœuf! et quel mouton!
La bonne et tendre compagnie!*

No, ladies, there is no life like that we lead at Saint Martin's; and we must really and truly see you there some day; I shall return there to-morrow to receive our duke and duchess de Chaulnes on Sunday, who are to bring madame de Coulanges and the abbé Têtu with them. The cardinal has long desired madame de Coulanges to come, and I have also long wished her to see Saint Martin's, and to see me at Saint Martin's; for she will there find my elbows at liberty, as they say, and so perfectly at liberty, that she will have an idea of how much I am beloved in this house, and, if I may say so, held in estimation from the turnspit to the master. I cannot, indeed, sufficiently praise the cardinal; there is no friendly attention he

* What beef! what mutton! and what veal!
O rare and noble company!
Loudly our praises let us deal;
What beef! what mutton! and what veal!
Roast meat! so exquisite a meal
I ne'er did eat in Britany;
What beef! what mutton! and what veal!
O rare and noble company!

does not show me, and no confidence he does not feel in me. Even his whole family is become mine; I am there indiscriminately on all occasions, and I am on the eve of going to Evreux with the same freedom, and the same pleasure, that I go to Pontoise: in short, I may say there never was a happier life than mine: God grant that the life to come may be equally so! I must here finish the avowal I have made to you of my extreme felicity.

While I was at St. Martin's, the exchange took place of Meudon for Choisy and four hundred thousand francs; this obliged me to return here, to prove to madame de Louvois the lively interest I take in all that concerns her. I found her very much pleased, and highly satisfied with the beautiful present she has made the king. I went with her the day before yesterday to Versailles; the king received her at madame de Maintenon's. His majesty loaded her with civilities, and she had the courage to answer him, by saying, that she was delighted at having had any thing in her possession by which she could testify her respect and gratitude to him; that she had always considered Meudon as a house which was destined to him, and that it was in this view alone she had taken so much pains to keep it in good repair, and to restore it so to him whenever he pleased to have it; that she knew the intentions of the late M. de Louvois, whose design, if God had spared his life for him to have explained himself, was to have made a present of it to his majesty. The king said wonders; she afterwards saw Monseigneur, who thanked her for her noble present; in short, the whole scene passed off admirably, and we are now occupied in removing our furniture from Meudon to Choisy, and in securing to ourselves our four hundred thousand francs, of which some small portion ought to come *to the little count de Nicei;* but,

with all madame de Louvois's affection for me, the beautiful eyes of her casket will always dazzle hers in such a manner, that she will never see, *no more shall I*, the little presents she might make me. I have always said, I am born for superfluity and not for necessity: I must content myself, and die happy in the midst of indigence.

I was delighted, my adorable countess, with the sacred characters with which you have honoured me. I thank you for receiving so well, as you assure me you do, all I say to your mother respecting yourself and your royal chateau, and I entreat you to persevere; for I certainly merit some acknowledgement for all the tender and respectful sentiments I feel for you, and all that surrounds you; would to God that a puff of wind would blow me once more towards Donzère! I well know where I should go; I doubt not that this royal chateau is improving daily in beauty, and that my taste will, in every respect, be more satisfied than ever: but it is much more probable that a puff of wind will blow you to these shores, and in this case, I will show you, whenever you please, my houses at Chaulnes, Saint Martin's, and Choisy, which you will not dislike. I am going again to Saint Martin's for a week, after which I shall return to Choisy, to arrange, and plan, and replan, from morning till night; it is only on this condition that madame de Louvois will suffer me to go: of the four days that I have been here, I have slept two nights at her house; in short, the house where I am the least, is madame de Coulanges's, who has her merit also. I am delighted that you approve my verses: I send you some more. I am going to dine at the hôtel de Chaulnes; its owners returned last evening from Versailles. The duke still flatters himself that he shall have Menilmontant, and the duchess still opposes it; your friend is not always very reasonable, but I sing

my couplets aloud with the freedom God has given me, in spite of her grimaces. I am going to see how the business proceeds, and to drink your health, adorable mother, daughter, and grand-daughter. M. de Vendôme is going to command in Catalonia, and M. de Noailles is coming back to have his portrait finished by Rigaud. The duchess de Villeroi sends a thousand remembrances to the lovely Paulina, upon a new score. You cannot imagine how much a pregnancy of four months and a half becomes this duchess.

Adieu, my charming governess; read my letter with all its points and commas, as a reward for the good emphasis I give to yours.

LETTER *MXLIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, June 19, 1695.

I HAVE been very much grieved at madame de Coulanges's colic; I advise her to apply to Carette, or to go to Vichi; we must not let such dangerous and painful disorders take possession of our poor frames. If we may pass from so melancholy a subject to a trifle which you sent Paulina, I must tell you, that we have felt all the point of it; it appeared to us as if madame Cornuel was raised from the dead, or that she had sent it from the other world. For my own part, I would congratulate M. de Poissi very sincerely upon the subject, if I had only had the honour of seeing him twice in my life; but he may be assured of our secret admiration. *Ah, masks! I know you*, on seeing certain persons enter who were announced by great titles. Why did not this natural and simple idea occur a thousand times to me, who mortally hate great titles upon little subjects? I

admire the humility of those who wish to bear them; they would refuse them, if they had the wit to reflect on what the explanation of these fine names costs them; and how terribly it outrages their poor humble names, which would not be thought of, if they did not wish to assume the feathers of the peacock, which so ill become them. I hope this saying will in future prevent this sort of usurpation, and that it may correct it, as Moliere has corrected so many follies; God grant it, and that every one may tremble lest he should be addressed with, *Mask, I know you!* You cannot doubt, my dear cousin, that we have received with your letter all the prepossession which it has appeared to us you have for this saying, which I entreat you to place at the head of M. du Bellai's collection. I would tell you one of this country, but it would be lost upon you; I keep it till we have forgotten the one in question; that is to say, never.

Yes, child, I am in this chamber, in this beautiful cabinet, where you have seen me, surrounded with such beautiful prospects. M. de Grignan is gone to take a trip towards the coast; his absence will be felt by us: we expect M. de Carcassonne here, in two or three days. If you were to write a few lines to the archbishop of Arles on his resurrection, in the style of an *hallelujah*, it seems to me as if you would please him highly; he is very much alive to the joy of being returned from so great a distance, never having been at such a feast. You are greatly beloved by all the inhabitants of this chateau: you know how we live here; what good cheer, what society, what liberty we enjoy; the days pass too quickly; and this it is that destroys me on every side. If you go to Vichi, you cannot dispense with coming to Grignan. I am tempted to request you to give a thousand respectful compliments to madame

de Villeroi: you are fortunate in being often with this amiable lady. Paulina thinks you are also very much so, in seeing her daughter-in-law (the duchess) still; she has received her letter with great pleasure, and conjures you to continue her in the friendship of this duchess, of yourself, and of madame de Coulanges.

LETTER * MXLV.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, June 20, 1695.

You are now enjoying the beauties of the country, my dear; spring appears in all its glory. I am going to be guilty of great excess, for I calculate upon setting out on Sunday for St. Martin's, with M. and madame de Chaulnes, and to spend three days there; the pleasure I expect will be interrupted by ill health: I am arrived to such a degree of delicacy, that the sight of a good dinner makes me sick; I am therefore intimidated, and in this state the most trifling things appear considerable to me. Madame de Louvois went yesterday to return thanks to the king: he gave her a private audience at madame de Maintenon's; she feels more than ever the happiness of having got rid of Meudon. The king is gone to Trianon, where he will remain till the journey to Fontainbleau. I believe I sent you word, that M. de Montchevreuil is about to marry his son to the cousin-german of madame de Lorges, a little person whom you have often seen with her: she is to have three hundred and eighty thousand livres. It was you who informed me, that M. de Vendôme is to command in Catalonia, and that M. de Noailles is returning home ill. M. de Coulanges has more affairs upon his hands than ever, and all of equal importance; but they

are pleasant when they make him happy; that is of the most consequence. I thought the couplets of count de Nicei very pretty; it is an amiable child: no one, therefore, leaves more agreeable ideas than he does in his absence; this little count will attain to immortality. Like you, my friend, I have marked the time of our poor madame de la Fayette's death. Madame de Caylus amuses herself wonderfully at her own house; the court does not appear to her a place of pleasure: she does not quit madame de Leuville an instant, who gives the prettiest suppers possible every evening. I do not think the purchase of Menilmontant hopeless; and, no offence to madame de Chaulnes, it would be the best acquisition M. de Chaulnes could make. Madame d'Humières (la maréchale) has retired to the Carmelites; she has let the house of the late mademoiselle de la Porte: she entirely governs the faubourg St. Jaques; and, what is still more wonderful, father de la Tour † governs her. You know that M. de Lauzun has marshal d'Humières's apartment at Versailles; he has bespoken for his wife a diamond necklace, that will cost two hundred thousand francs. Adieu, my dear friend; I wish for your return much more than I expect it; I beg you to say innumerable things for me to madame de Grignan: tell the amiable Paulina, not to reduce me to the extremity of loving one who is ungrateful. Madame de Mêmes makes her appearance in a coach worth a hundred thousand louis. Read the genealogy of F**** in the *Mercure Galant*, and you will see that it is the only noble and illustrious house in the world, and that the late grand-master ‡ deceived himself when he supposed he derived any portion of his splendour from another quarter.

† No doubt, because this father was a Jesuit, whereas the faubourg was occupied by Jansenists.

‡ The duke du Lude.

LETTER *MXLVI.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MESDAMES DE SÉVIGNÉ AND DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, June 22, 1695.

I ARRIVED from Saint Martin's the day before yesterday; the whole of yesterday I passed at Choisy; I am going to sleep at Versailles, to be ready to set off tomorrow morning to Evreux with all the Bouillons in the world; who begin to love me after the example of the cardinal, and wish to have me in their turn. And now say, ladies, if you can, that your little cousin is not a man of consequence! You have further to learn, that I cannot go to one place without, "Mercy on me!" being cried in another; for madame de Louvois was yesterday in so terrible a rage at my leaving her again for six or seven days, and reproached me so affectionately, that I was on the point of sacrificing to her my journey to Evreux; but I showed her such civil, affecting, and threatening letters from M. and mademoiselle de Bouillon, that at length she yielded, on condition that, on my return, I would not leave her a moment, to knock and knock at Choisy from morning till night. I must, notwithstanding, give a little portion of my time to Saint Martin's; for madame de Chaulnes, who is determined to kill herself at any rate, by the many torments she heaps upon herself without rhyme or reason, was not able to go there last week, as she had fixed with madame de Coulanges, to whom the cardinal wishes to show how much I am master of this delightful place, and how little, when I am there, he is thought of. This journey is only deferred, and my vanity will take care to renew the subject as soon as the health of the duchess will permit. This is a great

thorn out of my side; for the affair of Menilmontant has failed a second time: you may suppose that the difficulty rests with the first president, whose character it is to start objections to every thing. As I have not seen M. de Chaulnes since I have been here, from his extreme love of Versailles, I am not acquainted with the particulars of the rupture of this bargain; but I shall know them soon; for the king is going to Marly for a week, when the duke will dine at Paris, and I intend to dine with him to bid him adieu, and to see how the noble duchess is; who has selected for a nurse, in preference to every other person, madame de Saint Germain, with a distaff at her side and the spindle in her hand. I have just spent the pleasantest time in the world at Saint Martin's; M. de Chaulnes came there to see us with madame de Guénégaud. You ask, ladies, for all the follies which, "*Do you see him?*" "*No.*" "*No more do I,*" have produced. I send you all the new ones, and the last I shall write; that this pleasantry, which would become bad in the end, may not be pushed too far. Cardinal de Bouillon, to soften the destiny of his nieces, who are in convents (at least the two youngest, for the eldest is at court), has taken them to Saint Martin's, and takes charge much more willingly of mademoiselle d'Albret than of mademoiselle de Chateau Thierry, so that we call the little d'Albret *madame de Saint Martin*, and it is she who does the honours; but at this very time she prefers, to the Port Royal of Paris, a convent at Pontoise, where she remains during the short stay her uncle is obliged to make at Versailles and at Marly; and she is accordingly at Pontoise now, the cardinal being at Versailles to-day, to accompany his majesty to Marly. But let us return to our fold: M. de Chaulnes was making himself familiar with little

d'Albret; he thought her handsome, and could not even forbear telling her so; and I advised him to propose to her to be his daughter-in-law*: "Would to God!" said the cardinal. "Would to God!" said M. de Chaulnes. But alas! do you see this husband, this duke de Pecquigny, this only son? *No. No more do I;* and we laughed heartily. M. de Chaulnes went to Paris; and I wrote the following lines, which I sent to him the next day; they are also to the tune of *Joconde:*

La belle d'Albret pour certain
Dans deux jours se marie,
Tout se prépare à Saint Martin
Pour la cérémonie.
Elle épouse un joli garçon
Fait comme une peinture;
Le voyez-vous? vous dites, non:
Ni moi, je vous le jure.

Il est fils d'un fort grand seigneur,
Homme de conséquence;
Trois fois à Rome ambassadeur,
Et duc et pair de France.
Son épouse dans Trianon
Fera bonne figure;
Le voyez-vous? vous dites, non
Ni moi, je vous le jure.

Le petit comte de Nicé
Qui, bien loin d'etre bête,
Pour son age est fort avancé,
Doit venir à la fête.
Il y brillera, ce dit-on,
D'une riche parure;
Le voyez-vous? vous dites, non:
Ni moi, je vous le jure.

* The jest consists in M. de Chaulnes's having no children.

On dit déjà que dans un an
La nouvelle duchesse
Pourra nous donner un enfant
Digne de sa noblesse.
Qu'il sera joli, ce poupon !
L'aimable créature !
Le verrez-vous ? je crois que non :
Ni moi, je vous le jure.

Que Chaulnes sera satisfait
De voir sa belle fille
D'un rejetton aussi parfait
Augmenter sa famille !—
Mais tout ceci n'est que chanson,
Et que pure chimère ;
Nous ne voyons rien tout de bon,
Et je m'en desespère *.

Well! what say you to this? the jest is now ended; I repeat it to you.

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* The lovely d'Albret in two days
Will tie the nuptial band,
And at Saint Martin's for the feast
What gaieties are plann'd !
A charming youth the bridegroom is,
Form'd by a model rare.
" Pray do you see him?" " No," say you.
" No more do I, I swear."

The only son of a great lord,
A man of consequence;
Three times ambassador to Rome,
And duke and peer of France.
In Trianon, his blooming bride
Will make a figure there.
" Pray do you see him?" " No," say you.
" No more do I, I swear."

The little count de Nicei too,
Of no ignoble race,
And for his age a forward youth,
The nuptial feast will grace;

I found madame de Coulanges here, in a very charming state of health; she is even grown fat, which is a very good sign. I shall not tell you much public news, for I know none. Madame de Créqui (la maréchale) has been near death; but she is out of danger. Adieu, ladies; adorable mother and daughter, adieu; adieu, beautiful Paulina. I am delighted, as you may suppose, that M. de Grignan has been treated with all the distinctions he merits: but is it true, that the enemy's fleet was before Marseilles, with an intention to bombard it? What an eternal and unfortunate war! There is no end to the songs and epigrams of the satirical poets; but I have nothing to do with these: I flatter myself at least that you will receive something by a by-way. Once more adieu. This is the second letter I have written to you, since I received yours.

Dress'd in a splendid suit, 'tis said,
And rich beyond compare.
"Pray do you see him?" "No," say you.
"No more do I, I swear."

'Tis said too, that within a year,
He may this duchess thank
For bringing forth a beauteous babe,
Worthy his noble rank.
O what a charming child 'twill be!
How sprightly, gay, and fair!
"Pray shall you see him?" "I fear, not.'
"No more shall I, I swear."

How pleas'd the duke de Chaulnes will be,
To see his dear son's wife
Enrich his house with such a branch!
'Twill give him longer life.
But this, alas! is all a song,
An idle whim, I swear;
For, in good earnest, nought we see,
And I am in despair.

LETTER *MXLVII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, June 24, 1695.

MADAME de Louvois did not wait for the approbation of the world in wishing for Choisy: it is the only house she has ever desired: the king and she have made a very good bargain: they appear also to be highly satisfied: every thing has passed on both sides with civilities which we sometimes see take place between private individuals, but which are rarely experienced with a sovereign. The king is at Marly for nine days; the duchess du Lude is of the party; and to complete her happiness, she is to take to Pontoise, and bring back from thence, madame de Maintenon, who is going there to see a nun of St. Cyr. The king gave an entertainment last Monday, at Trianon, to the king and queen of England; there was an opera, at which the king was present; madame de Maintenon did not make her appearance there. The favour which M. de la Rochefoucault enjoys, is much talked of; it is affirmed that he has gained a complete ascendancy over Monseigneur's mind, and that he makes all the use of his power which the king could desire. His majesty, a few days ago, took madame de Maintenon, followed by her women, to sup at a country-house of this new favourite, which is called *la Selle* (the stool); and I explain it to you thus, that you may not think he took them to ****. He (the king) is going some day to l'Etang, to the house of M. de Barbesieux, that he may appear to divide his favours. Another great article of news is, that the princesses brought the countess de la Chaise, the marchionesses de la Chaise and de la Lu-

zerne, to dine and sup with his majesty; I suppose this distinction has very much affected them, for till then they had received no other distinction than the salute. M. de Coulanges arrived the day before yesterday from Saint Martin's: he went immediately to Choisy, the next day to Versailles, and sets out again to-day for Evreux with M. de Bouillon; I have proposed to him not to lose so much time by the way, and to place himself at once in a swing, which would throw him first to one side and then to the other, without his setting foot to the ground.

I expect the company of a person to-day who would not displease you, my dear: it is M. de Tréville, who is coming to read to two or three persons a work he has composed; it is a summary of the fathers, which is said to be the finest thing that has ever been written. This work will never see the light, and will only be read to those who will be at my house to-day. I am the only one that is unworthy to hear it; but this is a secret which I confide to you alone.

——————N'abusez pas, prince, de mon secret;
Au milieu de mon lettre il m'échappe à regret*:

but it has escaped me. M. de Bagnols is gone to join the army; and my sister, I believe, will soon return; she has not, however, spoken to me yet of the day of her departure. Is it very warm at Grignan, my dear? I remember having been there in such weather as this. The affair of Menilmontant appears quite at an end; I have taken it into my head, however, that it will be brought about at last. My dear friend, adieu.

* Do not abuse my confidence, prince: my secret has escaped me in my letter with regret.

LETTER *MXLVIII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Grignan, June 29, 1695.

It is gaining your cause well, sir, to lose it as you do. In spite of the intention, which I see you have, to break off all intercourse with the world, I cannot help telling you that your style, which we have recognised as possessing its usual charms, has given us a degree of pleasure which we have not experienced since your silence. My daughter and I have read your letter over many times: it is a delightful one; though you, perhaps, did not feel its value. How happy you are, sir, in preserving this alliance of wit with the seriousness and solidity of devotion! it enables you to make well placed reflections on the two tropics which you have lately seen so near you; and I know not how our friend Corbinelli has been able to withstand your letters. It is pity that a moral intercourse, like that which was established between you, should have been lost: the loss would not have happened with us; and as the appetite increases with eating, we have so great a desire to have once more the honour and pleasure of seeing you here, that my daughter cannot understand why, having health, the thought has not occurred to you to come and see us, and why you may not even come this autumn. In vain I represent to her that we shall not be there, and that without me you would fall again into your lethargy; it matters not, she insists on my hazarding the proposal. Indeed if you could judge of the pleasure we should derive from a visit, by the pleasure your letter has given us, I in conscience believe

you would not be able to resist us. I am going to speak of you, sir, to our *friend*. He will reply to me; I shall be obliged to acquaint you with his answer; perhaps he will still find some other opportunity to say a word to you: in short, I will forget no reason nor pretext to make you say a few words more; and to tell you, sir, that your understanding and your wit have made in no brains such deep impressions as they have done in those of your humble servants.

LETTER *MXLIX.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, July 8, 1695.

I CAN answer for M. de Tréville, that he would have been delighted if you had added to the noble company that heard him; and I am certain, my dear friend, that you would have been satisfied with your day; but you look down upon us from your chateau at Grignan, and I waste my time in wishing for you, without being able to help it. We are on the alert here, on the great event of the siege of Namur; for it is a very serious, and, apparently, will be a bloody siege: you know that marshal de Boufflers has thrown himself into it, with six regiments of foot, dragoons, and the king's regiment of horse: so poor Sanzei is a great man at Namur. Marshal de Boufflers has the double tertian fever, but he will have other things to do than to attend to it. Marshal de Lorges is out of danger. Every thing here resounds with the praises of marshal de Villeroi: it is only a few days ago that the king spoke of him in terms of approbation; and all the warriors that compose his army, write only to sing his praises. I believe, in the end, that the duke de Chaulnes is

going to purchase Puteaux, a house near the bridge of Neuilly, situated on the banks of the river: there is room for wonderful improvements, and he will make them; for he has an extreme desire for a country-house. The king is going to Marly for a fortnight; if the duchess du Lude is of the party, it will be for the third time following: these distinctions are very charming when we are in that country; happy is he who can see it all in the point of view in which it should be regarded! I have not seen father Quesnel's* letter; it is said he disowns it, and he cannot do better. You know, my dear, that M. de la Trappe (the abbé de Rancé) has given up his abbey, with the king's permission, to don Zozime, the superior of his house; and that he means to become a simple monk: this is worthy of him, and crowns completely a noble life. Father de la Rue's funeral oration is now thought no more of than the queen-mother's. We have forgotten that a M. de Luxembourg ever existed: foolish is he who calculates on the fame which follows death; this, in truth, ought not to occupy us in this life; but men will always have their errors, and cherish them.

M. de Coulanges arrived in the evening of the day before yesterday, more delighted with M. de Bouillon, mademoiselle de Bouillon, and de Navarre, than with all his old friends: he set out yesterday for Choisy, where he will remain till our journey to Saint Martin's be accomplished: in this sort of parties I only feel myself equal to the strength of the plan; the execution is very much above me. My sister mounts the hippogriff on Sunday, and arrives on Monday at Paris. M.

* The celebrated Arnauld died in Flanders, in 1694. He had received the sacraments from the hands of father Quesnel. The letter in question apparently related to this event.

de Bagnols† does not lose sight of marshal de Villeroi, which makes me tremble for his life. M. de Rheims has purchased Erval's‡ house, at 221,000 livres. Adieu, my amiable; forget not to love me, I conjure you, and let me be remembered in the place you inhabit; send me word if the charming Paulina was satisfied with the mysterious portrait you gave her. Madame de Caylus came to see me yesterday, as handsome as an angel; she asked me, as a favour, to come and see the arrangements of her house. I shall suffer more in paying this visit than will appear: what I feel on the subject can only be confided, my dear friend, to you.

LETTER * MI.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, July 29, 1695.

NEITHER M. Arnauld, nor father Quesnel, my dear friend, is any longer spoken of: every thought is directed towards Namur. Those who have lately fallen, have thrown us into a consternation which leaves us no feeling of joy. Madame de Morstein is inconsolable. The chancellor's excellent lady§ bitterly laments her grandson de Vieuxbourg; and madame de Maulévrier sends from her presence all who would speak comfort to her, even father Bourdaloue. No tidings are known of count d'Albret, except that he has been trepanned;

† Intendant of the army of Flanders.

‡ I think it ought to be Hervart; he who had been comptroller-general under cardinal Mazarin, and who is called Herval in several memoirs of the times. This house had been the hôtel d'Epernon.

§ Anne Frances de Loménie, wife of Louis Boucherat, chancellor of France.

and since then not a word has been heard respecting him. M. and madame de Chaulnes are extremely uneasy about him. You know that the prince de Conti has the small-pox: it has come out very heavily, and begins to suppurate without any ill consequences; so that we hope he will do well. Detachments are made on all sides to send to the aid of Namur: Sanzei is on the spot; his mother is the only one who is more to be pitied than he. The duchess du Lude, who is returned from Versailles, informs me that she took my grand-niece de la Chaise to dine with the king at Trianon; his majesty and the dauphin talked of nothing but the pleasing manners of this little personage, and of the little embarrassment she betrayed: I suppose she confessed* the king well. The first president† has had a sort of apoplexy; he has been bled four times; his mouth is a little aside; he is to set out immediately for Bourbon. The following is an epigram that has been made on his disorder:

> Ne le saignez pas tant: l'émétique est meilleure;
> Purgez, purgez, purgez, le mal est dans l'humeur‡.

I think I should do well to adopt the same plan as this magistrate, for my stomach is still very weak. I have consulted whether I might take coffee two hours after taking germander: I find it may be taken with perfect safety, and that they even agree well together. Adieu, my dear; I shall say no more to you to-day; I only entreat you to make my compliments to *tutti quanti* (all and every one), and particularly to do your-

* Allusion to father de la Chaise, the king's confessor.

† Achilles de Harlay, first president of the parliament of France.

‡ Bleed him not so much; an emetic is better; purge him, purge him, purge him, the evil lies in the humour.

self the violence to embrace the charming Paulina for me most affectionately. My sister† returns you a thousand thanks for the honour of your remembrance, she was highly gratified by it: she is at Versailles for a few days.

LETTER *MLI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, August 6, 1695.

I SHALL write you only a very short and poor letter, my dear friend, to thank you for yours, which has given us great pleasure. I shall never change my opinion with respect to long and circumstantial details, while I read yours. We are charmed with Navarre‡; the situation, the building, like that of Marly, which I have never seen, the excellent society—all this convinces me that the house ought to rank with yours: as for Choisy, it is made on purpose for you. Your couplets inform all who pass, of the nobility of its origin and its fate; but you deserve to be exalted to the skies by the couplet, in which you humble yourself to the foot of the mount *with the coachman of Vertha-mont*§; any man who will place himself up to the ears in this mud, and will croak such pretty couplets, deserves the situation M. Tambonneau gives him. The couplet ranks with the best you have ever made; the countess, whose approbation you always ask, entreats you to believe it; it is charming, it surprises: in short, croak on, and communicate your croakings to us.

† Madame de Gué-Bignols.

‡ A chateau near Evreux, which belonged to the duke de Bouillon.

§ A famous coachman, who made all the songs of the Pont-neuf.

But, good God, what an effusion of blood at Namur! how many tears! how many widows! and how many afflicted mothers! And they are cruel enough to think this is not sufficient, and they wish that marshal de Villeroi had also beaten, killed, and massacred, poor M. de Vaudemont*! what madness! I am uneasy respecting your nephew de Sanzei; I pity his mother; it is said, that she is coming nearer to wait the event of the siege, which appears to us to be worthy of the fury of the marshal (de Boufflers) who defends it; no opportunity of fighting is lost. Our Germany is very quiet; our principal anxiety is for her†. Adieu, my dear cousin; did I not promise you that my letter would be dull? We have sometimes sorrows, and we know why; I speak of them to madame de Coulanges. My daughter sends you her remembrances; you have highly amused her by your songs and your chat, for your letter is a true conversation. I have scattered your remembrances in every apartment; they have been received, and are returned with zeal. I embrace you, my amiable cousin, and exhort you still to spend your time delightfully in honour of polygamy‡, which, instead of being a hanging-case to you, constitutes all the pleasure and happiness of your life.

* M. de Vaudemont made a noble retreat before marshal de Villeroi, who had lost time.

† On account of the marquis de Grignan, who was in the army of Germany.

‡ A jest on the subject of M. de Coulanges's *second wife*, madame de Louvois.

LETTER * MLII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, August 12, 1695.

The death of M. de Paris †, my dear, must infallibly have surprised you: never was an event so sudden. Madame de Lesdiguières was present at this spectacle; it is said that her grief is very moderate. The successor is not yet spoken of; but many persons believe that it will be M. de Cambray (Fénélon), and this will certainly be a good choice: others say cardinal de Janson. We shall know this great point on Monday; the subject is worth thinking of. The question now is, to find a person who will take upon himself the funeral oration; it is said that there are two trifling circumstances which render the task difficult—his life, and his death.

You have no doubt received the articles of the capitulation of Namur; you will see that we make war very politely, and kill one another most genteelly. We are now bombarding Brussels‡; songs, madrigals, and witticisms, are pouring upon marshal de Villeroi, who perhaps is not to blame: this is the misfortune of having places; happy is he that has none, though few persons consider this to be a blessing. The countess de Grammont is returned; I saw her yesterday, so fatigued by the Bourbon waters, that she confirmed me

† Francis de Harlay de Chanvalon, archbishop of Paris, died at Conflans, near Paris, August 6, 1695, aged 70.

‡ Marshal de Villeroi commanded the army at that period. D'Avrigny says, that three thousand houses were burned in Brussels. The Jesuit, so scrupulous with respect to dates, is not so difficult with respect to facts. Besides, this bombardment was a retaliation for the assaults made by the enemy against our maritime places.

more than ever in my laziness; she came back in a litter, and says she would much rather have returned on foot. The king goes, on Saturday, to Meudon for two days; the distinctions fall at present upon Meudon, and not upon Marly; every one has been there this week, even to M. de Buzenval and M. de Saint Germain. As I feel myself incapable of adopting the resolution of going to Bourbon, I shall try at Paris the waters of Forges; this is called going from hot to cold. Since madame de Fontevrauld † has been here, Saint Joseph's, where she almost constantly is, is the rendezvous of the gay world, but not of gallantry. Adieu, my dear. All M. de Chaulnes's measures are broken up; madame de Chaulnes comforts herself for every thing with madame de Saint Germain; she cannot do without her; and this teaches us to do without madame de Chaulnes.

LETTER * MLIII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 2, 1695.

Alas, my friend! the archbishop is thought no more of than if he had never been; much ill was said of him after his death: a successor has been named ‡; and since he has been named, both are at rest. The present is a vortex which does not allow for reflections. Every one was mad yesterday at Paris; nothing was to be seen but women in despair; some running through the streets, others shutting themselves up in churches; nothing was to be heard but "I have no

† Sister of madame de Montespan.

‡ Louis Antoine de Noailles, bishop of Chalons, afterwards cardinal.

longer a husband!" "I have no longer a son!" Others were silent on their misfortunes, but they did not feel the less*. The countess de Fiesque said, that battle was given, and consequently gained: she added, that the prince of Orange was taken prisoner. I went in the evening to madame de Carman's, where I met madame de Sully, the duchess du Lude, madame de Chaulnes, and a dozen other women, among whom was the countess de Fiesque: when they had talked a long time, I undertook to restore them to reason (difficult task!) by a little reasoning, which went to prove that no battle had taken place; they all laughed at me; and now that the event justifies my reasoning, they suppose I have the management of the army from this place; nothing is talked of but my penetration, from which I infer that we scarcely ever know why we praise, or why we blame. Yesterday I was a fool, and to-day I am the wisest person in the world; and the truth is, that I am neither the one nor the other; for we learned by a courier who arrived, that it was impossible to give battle without risking the whole army. M. de Conti sent this word to the king, as did the duke du Maine, and all the chiefs of the army.

M. de Coulanges is still at Navarre; he desires me, in all his letters, to say a thousand things to you for him. The king is to set out on the 24th of this month, for Fontainbleau. M. and madame de Chaulnes are going immediately to Chaulnes; and it is reported that

* Namur had just surrendered. This is one of the most successful events, if not one of the most brilliant military achievements, of William III., who was then acknowledged by no other title than that of Prince of Orange. We lost ten thousand men in this vain defence: it is true that the public were consoled by saying the enemy had lost double the number; but this letter shows that Paris attended but little to this slender consolation.

I am going with them. I am taking the Forges waters, which I find of service to me. I am delighted that madame de Grignan's health is so good: I congratulate you and her on the circumstance. Do yourself the violence to embrace the charming Paulina for my sake, my dear, I entreat you.

LETTER *MLIV.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 9, 1695.

What events, madam! what talk! what songs! what epigrams! what dignities! Marshal de Boufflers is created a duke; but you already know that. The same courier who brought the intelligence of the reduction of Namur, was sent back to inform him, that the king had made him a duke; and to tell him, at the same time, that he might take the road to court: and when, from a feeling of gratitude, he found himself impelled to come and return thanks to the king, the prince of Orange informed him that he was his prisoner. It is supposed that this proceeding was in return for ours at Dixmude †: he was disposed, however, to allow him to return upon his parole; but the marshal believed he ought to wait for the king's orders. The marshal is in raptures at his new title, and does not yet know the evils it may bring, which, according to appearances, are not far off. Let us return to the epigrams:

† It appears that Louvois, contrary to the capitulations, had kept the garrisons of Dixmude and Deynse. The prince of Orange retaliated, by making them be given up in exchange for marshal de Boufflers. Whatever affectation Lewis XIV. may have adopted in rewarding this general, his defence of Namur has been very much criticised by Vauquière, and perhaps justly.

marshal de Villeroi is bespattered with them; he has however the consolation of knowing that the king is convinced he is not to blame: but I know well what I am saying; the world will judge of what it does not understand; and as we are guided by the opinion of others, we are foolish enough to think ourselves unfortunate in spite of our good conduct. The king is going to-day to Marly for ten days.

M. and madame de Chaulnes will set out in a few days for Chaulnes, and I with them: what say you to this courage? Do you not think me really a great woman? M. de Coulanges is still at Evreux; madame de Louvois pouts at him; mademoiselle de Bouillon passionately loves him, and detains him in spite of himself. I write to him regularly, and send him all the news; to whom do you give the preference? The passions are horrible; I have never hated them so much as since they are no longer in my way; this is fortunate. Our dragoon* has come off with honour, and quite lives on horseback; he has written a very entertaining letter to his sister; he has been mentioned particularly to the king, in every account that has been sent; and what is more, madame de Montchévreuil herself told me so. You may easily guess, my dear, the delight of madame de Sanzei, who now knows that her son is well: think, that out of 12,000 men that were at Namur, only 3,300 remain. I forgot to tell you, that it was M. de Guiscard who came to court with the information that marshal de Boufflers is a prisoner. Madame de Sully has the same complaint as madame de Grignan; she is taking the waters of Forges, which are of infinite service to her: but Forges is rather too far from Grignan; she should come nearer, my friend.

* M. de Sanzei, M. de Coulanges's nephew.

I forgive madame de Sully for this disorder; but madame de Grignan is a little too forward for her age. It is said that of all illnesses this is the least troublesome. I request you to inform me constantly of the state of madame de Grignan's health, about whom I am very uneasy. Let me not be forgotten where you are, and kiss the charming Paulina for my sake; you will acknowledge that I exact very difficult things from your friendship.

LETTER *MLV.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 16, 1695.

It is only to mark the cadence that I write to you, madam, to-day; for I have received no letter from you this week, and I am ashamed of having no great events to inform you of, which for some time have not failed us. To tell you that the king has been at Marly for a week, is rare news to be sure; the duchess du Lude is there; the king returns to-morrow, and is to set out on the 22d of this month for Fontainbleau. The most extraordinary piece of intelligence however is, that I believe I shall go on Sunday to Versailles for two or three days. The journey to Chaulnes will be immediately in agitation: I hope also that I shall be of that party; but my health is so easily impaired, that I dare not now form any plans. M. de Coulanges is to return to-day from Evreux, to break with madame de Louvois, and go to Chaulnes. I must also inform you, my friend, that it is father Gaillard who is *not* to make the funeral oration of the late archbishop (of Paris). What I mean is this: The first president and father de la Chaise applied to father Gaillard on this great business; sa her

Gaillard replied, that he perceived many difficulties in the undertaking. These, however, are obviated thus: he is to deliver a sermon on the deceased, in the midst of the ceremony; to turn every thing into morality; to avoid praise and censure, which are two very dangerous rocks; the prelude to funeral orations will be omitted; he will throw himself at once upon the audience by exhortation; he will speak of the surprise of death, will say little of the deceased, and then, God lead you to eternal life. Adieu, my lovely friend; let my remembrance be preserved at Grignan, and especially by the charming Paulina. I believe M. de Chaulnes intends to purchase Villeffit of M. de Ficubet, at which madame de Chaulnes appears very dissatisfied. Madame de Grignan's confessor-extraordinary † is to read to me, to-morrow, the funeral oration he has made upon this pious man.

LETTER * MLVI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Grignan, September 20, 1695.

And so you are at our poor Rocks, my dear children, experiencing there the sweets of tranquillity, exempt from all duties and all fatigues, and our dear little marchioness can breathe again! Good heavens! how well you describe to me her situation, and her extreme delicacy! I am so affected at it, and I enter so affectionately into your ideas, that my heart is oppressed,

† This seems to allude to some jest of M. de Coulanges.

Maucaron had refused to compose the funeral oration of the archbishop of Paris, alleging that he was *incommodé* (indisposed). The opportunity was not lost of replying: "Say also that the subject is *incommode* (inconvenient)."

and tears rush into my eyes. It is to be hoped that you will only have the merit of bearing your sorrows with resignation and submission; but if God should appoint otherwise, like all unforeseen events, it would turn out differently from your expectations: I will believe, however, that this dear being will last, with care, as long as any one; we have a thousand examples of recovery. Has not mademoiselle de la Trousse suffered from almost every kind of disorder? In the mean time, my dear child, I enter into your feelings with infinite affection, and from the bottom of my heart. You do me justice when you say you are afraid of affecting me too much by relating to me the state of your mind: it does indeed affect me, be assured I feel for you keenly. I hope this letter will find you calmer and happier. Paris seems to be quite out of your thoughts, on account of our marchioness. You are thinking only of Bourbon and the spring. Continue to inform me of your plans, and do not leave me in ignorance of any thing that concerns you.

Give me some account of the letters of the 23d and 30th of August. There was also a note for Galois, which I desired M. Branjon to pay. Give me an answer upon this subject. The good Branjon is married; he has written me a very charming letter upon the occasion. Let me know whether the match is as good as he represents it to be. The lady is related to all the parliament, and to M. d'Arouys. Explain this to me, my child. I also addressed a letter to you for our abbé Charrier. He will be sorry not to see you again; and M. de Toulon! you express yourself well respecting this ox: it is for him to tame him, and for you to stand firm where you are. Return the abbé's letter to Quimperlé.

With regard to your poor sister's health, it is not at

all good. It is no longer her loss of blood that alarms us, for that is over; but she does not recover her strength; she is still so much altered that you would scarcely know her, because her stomach does not regain its tone, and no food seems to nourish her: this arises from the bad state of her livèr, of which you know she has long complained. It is so serious an evil, that I am really alarmed at it. Remedies might be used for her liver, but they are unfavourable to the loss of blood, which we are in continual apprehension may return, and which has produced a bad effect upon the afflicted part. These two maladies, which require opposite medicines, reduce her to a truly pitiable situation. Time, we hope, will repair this devastation: I sincerely wish it; and if we enjoy this blessing, we shall go to Paris with all expedition. This is the point to which we are arrived, and which must be cleared up; I will be very faithful in my communications.

This languor makes us say little yet of the return of the warriors. I do not doubt, however, that the business will be concluded, it is too far advanced; but it will be without any great joy; and even if we go to Paris, they would set out two days after, to avoid the air of a wedding, and visits, which they wish not to receive; *a burnt child*, &c.

As to M. de St. Amant's grief, of which such a parade has been made at Paris, it was founded upon my daughter's having really proved by memorandoms, which she has showed to us all, that she had paid her son nine thousand francs out of ten she had promised him; and having in consequence sent him only a thousand, M. de St. Amant said he was cheated, that they wanted to take advantage of him, and that he would give no more, having already given the fifteen thousand francs of his daughter's portion (which he laid out at

Paris in stock, and for which he has the estates that were given up to him here), and that the marquis must seek for assistance in that quarter. You may suppose that when *that quarter* has paid, it may occasion some little chagrin; but it is at an end. M. de St. Amant thought in himself that it would not be advisable to quarrel with my daughter: so he came here as gentle as a lamb, wishing for nothing but to please and to take his daughter back with him to Paris; which he has done, though, in good truth, she ought to have waited for us: but the advantage of being in the same house with her husband, in that beautiful mansion of M. de St. Amant; of being handsomely lodged, and living sumptuously at no expense; made my daughter consent without hesitation to accept all these comforts. But we did not see her depart without tears, for she is very amiable; and was so much affected at bidding us adieu, that it could scarcely have been supposed she was going to lead a life of pleasure in the midst of plenty. She had become very fond of our society. She set out with her father on the first of this month.

Be assured, my son, that no Grignan intends you harm; that you are beloved by all; and that if this trifle had been a serious thing, they would have felt that you would have taken as much interest in it as you have done.

M. de Grignan is still at Versailles; we expect him shortly, for the sea is clear; and admiral Russel, who is no longer to be seen, will give him leave to come here.

I shall seek for the two little writings you mention. I rely much upon your taste. The letters to M. de la Trape, are books we cannot send, though in manuscript. You shall read them at Paris, where I still hope to see you; for I love you in a much greater degree than

you can love me. It is the order of nature, and I do not complain.

I enclose you a letter from madame de Chaulnes, which I send to you entire, from confidence in your prudence. You will justify yourself in things to which you well know what answer to make, and will pay no attention to those that may offend you. I have said for myself all I had to say, waiting for your answer respecting what I did not know; and I added, that I would inform you of what the duchess told me. Write to her therefore candidly, as having learned from me what she writes respecting you. After all, you should preserve this connexion; they love you, and have rendered you service; you must not wound gratitude. I have said, that you owed obligations to the intendant. But to you, my child, I say, is this friendship incompatible with your ancient leagues with the first president and the attorney-general? Is it necessary that you should break with your old friends, for the sake of securing an intendant? M. de Pommereuil did not exact such conduct. I have also said, that you ought to be heard; and that it was impossible you should have neglected to congratulate the attorney-general upon the marriage of his daughter. In short, my child, defend yourself; and tell me what you say, that I may second you.

What follows is for my good president.

I have received your last letter, my dear president; it is pleasing, like every thing you write. I am astonished that you have received no answer from Dupuis, I fear he is ill.

You are fortunate in having my son and our marchioness with you. Take care of her; divert her; amuse her; in short, put her in cotton, and preserve to

us this dear and precious personage. Do not fail to let me hear of her health; I take real interest in it.

My son sends me the congratulations of Pilois † and the workmen, who have finished the labyrinth. I accept their kindness, and I love and thank them. I would give them something to drink, if I were there.

My daughter and your idol love you dearly; but I more than all. Adieu, my good president; my son will show you this letter. I embrace your dove.

LETTER *MLVII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, September 30, 1695.

I AM going to talk to you very learnedly respecting madame de Grignan's disorder; that is, of the pain in her stomach, which is exactly the same as mine; my impatience has led me to try all sorts of medicines, and I shall be happy if my experience can be of use to her. Carette gave me his drops for nine months; they occasioned me no real pain, but they shrivelled me up to such a degree, without strengthening my stomach, that I will own to you, in confidence, that they made me ill a second time. Now for Helvetius; he has given me a preparation of wormwood, which has completely restored my stomach; as it leaves some degree of heat, but slight however, he has made me take the Forges waters, which have agreed with me admirably. I begin to grow fat, I eat fruit, I eat dinner and supper; in short, my friend, I am no longer the same being that I was two months ago. You know why I relate all these particulars to you: bring madame de Grignan, then, to

† The gardener at the Rocks.

Paris; I promise you that in three weeks Helvetius and I will restore her stomach, which is the seat of almost every disease. I am even reconciled to coffee, and as I know not how to use a thing without abusing it, I drink it to excess; my darling wormwood is a remedy for all disorders.

You will ask me, my friend, why, being so well as I tell you, I am not at Chaulnes? and my answer will be, that I am like those who become avaricious from being rich; since I have had something like health, I am become very careful of it. The bad weather alarmed me; if I could have foreseen, that it would be as fine as it is at present, I believe I should have undertaken this long journey; but I reserve myself for Dampierre, and I convert my house very easily into a country-house: I walk every morning upon the ramparts, and I spend the afternoons in solitude. The English court is at Fontainbleau; they have plays, and entertainments, and still they say they are dull; so much the worse for them. The marchioness de Grignan will see no one, which has prevented me from presenting myself at her door as often as I should have done. M. de Chaulnes, who has the knack of forcing open doors, says she is very amiable. M. de Coulanges is gone to Chaulnes; they will all return in a month, which is a very short time. The abbé and I do not leave madame de Sanzei ignorant of what you say of her. I beg you, my dear, to give a thousand compliments for me to madame de Grignan: I beg you also to embrace the lovely Paulina for my sake, as if you had no reason to complain of her.

LETTER * MLVIII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Chaulnes, October 10, 1695.

I AM now absolutely in the service of the duchess de Chaulnes; she is my good mistress, though M. de Chaulnes assures me that I have taken a strange place, and that I serve a strange mistress. She is going to speak, listen to her attentively.

FROM MADAME DE CHAULNES.

HERE we are, my dear governess, in a house which is not very ugly, and which my secretary (M. de Coulanges) thinks tolerably well furnished; but we often experience very bad weather, which is a sad thing in the country. Let us talk, my dear governess, of the beautiful countess, about whom we should be very uneasy, if we did not hope that her health henceforth will be improved: but I advise you not to let her take M. Alliot's medicines, for the late madame Colbert found herself much worse for them. You must think of nothing but of nursing her well; and for gently restoring her stomach, you have only to take her into a milder air than Grignan, as soon as possible. I am impatient for the campaign to be over, that you may send me word mademoiselle de Grignan has changed her name: no one wishes more sincerely than I do to see her well established. I am delighted, my dear governess, that you disapprove the purchase of all the vile houses near Paris, and like the acquisition we have made of Dampierre; I believe I informed you that we did not give a

silver penny in exchange. We have Dampierre, with five thousand livres a year, which are attached to it, to keep it in good repair; and, during the life of M. de Chaulnes, M. de Chevreux will take from our income five thousand livres a year more. We shall accommodate each other with respect to furniture, that we may have no confusion. I hope, my dear governess, you will often come and spend some little time with me there, and that you will not be sorry to be sometimes in the neighbourhood of Port Royal-des-Champs. My secretary has read your letter to M. de Chaulnes with all due emphasis, and we have pitied the beautiful countess; but I leave M. de Chaulnes to inform you of his eagerness to see the marchioness de Grignan: he has received all your son's letters, and he is highly pleased with them. We must not enter into country cabals, till we are all together at Paris; you will conclude that I am still disposed to bring an action against them, no one being better acquainted with the gossipings of Rennes; and the secretary knows too well what a risk Beaucé formerly ran, at the hôtel de Meneuf, on account of his vile tongue. We must wait till the winter, then, for every sort of explanation, with the good intention to restore peace. Madame de Châtre is brought to bed of a fine boy; M. de Lavardin, his grandfather, and madame de Châtre, his grandmother, are already appointed his sponsors. Fontainbleau says not a word, and Flanders still less; all the armies disperse on the twenty-fifth of this month; and the king and queen of England are already returned from Fontainbleau to Saint Germain. My dear governess, I am yours, and the beautiful countess's. A thousand compliments to all at Grignan.

FROM M. DE COULANGES.

I MUST tell you for myself, that I have been very much alarmed at the situation in which you described madame de Grignan; I did not know she was ill; you cannot doubt that I pray for her better health, for more reasons than one; for, vagabond as I am, I am very impatient to meet you sometimes in my way. A thousand caresses, a thousand affectionate remembrances, a thousand respects, a thousand compliments for you, my dearest governess, and for all that surround you. As soon as the weather is fine, I should wish madame de Coulanges to come here; but, indeed, we came too late for health so shattered as hers; for my own part, I am become a bilboacatch, which nothing injures, and which is always upon its legs, as if it had never had the gout.

LETTER *MLIX.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, October 15, 1695.

I HAVE just been writing to our duke and duchess de Chaulnes; but I excuse you from reading my letters; they are not worth reading. I defy all your emphasis, all your points and commas, to produce any good effect, therefore leave them as they are; besides, I have spoken of several little things to our duchess, which are not very entertaining. The best thing you could do for me, my good cousin, would be to send us, by some subtle magic, all the blood, all the vigour, all the health, and all the mirth, which you have to spare, to transfuse it into my child's frame. For these three months she has been afflicted with a species of disorder which is

said to be not dangerous, and which I think the most distressing, and, the most alarming, of any. I own to you, my dear cousin, that it destroys me, and that I have not fortitude enough to endure all the bad nights she makes me pass; in short, her last state has been so violent, that it was necessary to have recourse to bleeding in the arm: strange remedy, which makes blood to be shed when too much has been shed already; it is burning the taper at both ends; she has told us so, for, in the midst of her weakness and change, nothing can exceed her courage and patience. If we could regain strength, we should soon take the road to Paris; it is what we wish, and then we would present the marchioness of Grignan to you, with whom you must already begin to be acquainted on the word of the duke de Chaulnes, who has very gallantly forced open her door, and has drawn a very pleasing likeness of her. Preserve your friendship for us, my dear cousin, however unworthy of it our sorrow may make us; we must love our friends with all their faults; it is a great one to be ill: God grant, my dear friend, that you may escape it. I write to madame de Coulanges in the same plaintive tone, which will not quit me; for how is it possible not to be as ill in mind, as this countess, whom I see daily before my eyes, is in body? Madame de Coulanges is very fortunate in being out of the scrape; it seems to me as if mothers ought not to live long enough to see their daughters in such situations: I respectfully complain of it to Providence.

We have just been reading a discourse that has charmed us all, and even the archbishop of Arles, who is one of the trade; it is the funeral oration of M. de Fieubet by the abbé Anselme; it is the most correct, the wisest, the most suitable, and the most Christian performance, that it was possible to make on such a

subject: it is full of quotations from the holy scriptures, of excellent applications, of devotion, of piety, of dignity, and of a noble flowing style. Read it: if you are of our opinion, so much the better for you; and if you are not, so much the better for you still, in one sense, as it is a sign that your happiness, your health, and your vivacity, render you deaf to this language. But be this as it may, such is the advice I give you; for it is certain that we cannot laugh always; a song tells us this truth.

LETTER *MLX.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, October 28, 1695.

You have had the colic, my dear friend; and though I know that you are now well, I cannot be satisfied till I hear it from yourself. I ask you also for information respecting madame de Grignan; if you knew how much a keen air is against her complaint, you would oblige her to place herself in a comfortable and commodious litter, and come to Paris: the air of Lyons would teach her, that there is no better remedy for her than change of climate; this is the advice of my oracle (Helvetius). Madame (la maréchale) de Boufflers has been very ill of a similar disorder; she is now recovered. The king is returned in perfect health. I saw the duchess du Lude yesterday, who is come to Paris to take medicine and to be bled, for no other reason, I think, than being in too good a state of health. Great changes have taken place at Chaulnes; M. de Chaulnes loves his chateau as he loves his life, and cannot leave it. Madame de Chaulnes spends her days, and perhaps a great part of her nights, in gaming. M. de Coulanges is become

delicate and formal; country visits annoy him. I often see our little woman in the straw (the duchess de Villeroi*); she has a son a little bigger than his father, and a little less than the marshal (de Villeroi). Not a day passes in which she does not inquire after mademoiselle de Grignan, and wish her all the happiness and all the pain she herself feels. It is said, that marshal de Lorges is better, and that his disorder is no longer considered as apoplexy: his lady, who is gone to meet him, will accompany him to the waters of Plombières. Every one believes the marriage of M. de Lesdiguières with mademoiselle de Clérembault† concluded: the charm madame de Lesdiguières finds in this marriage is, that she will not have her son with her. The world also speaks of the marriage of mademoiselle d'Aubigné with the son‡ of M. de Noailles, and I believe that, in this instance, the world says true. I have also to inform you, that the abbé Têtu is delighted with madame de Carman; and that he complains loudly of his friends, for not having introduced him sooner to this meritorious lady. The solitude of the marchioness de Grignan is very much talked of here; her life is said to be insupportable, because she must see no one, or the best company: you perceive how necessary it is for you and her mother-in-law§ to return; my advice upon this subject would appear interested to you; but I hope this reason will not prevent you from following it, and that

* Marguerite le Tellier, daughter of the marquis de Louvois, minister of war.

† This marriage with mademoiselle de Clérembault did not take place; he married mademoiselle de Duras, the daughter of marshal Duras, in 1696.

‡ This marriage did not take place till the first of April 1698.

§ The countess de Grignan.

you will believe me as affectionately yours as I am in reality. I beg the favour of you to say a thousand things from me to madame de Grignan, and not to forget the beautiful and charming Paulina.

LETTER * MLXI.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, November 7, 1695.

HELVETIUS, after having reflected with all possible attention upon what you told me, my dear friend, wished to take away your letter, to consider it at leisure; he only told me yesterday what I am now going to relate to you. He is convinced that a keen air is very injurious to madame de Grignan, and that if it were possible for her to place herself in a commodious litter, and take short journeys, she would find herself relieved the moment she got to Lyons; this is a remedy which we highly approve here. Our oracle, this Helvetius, has saved the life of the poor *Tart*; he has a certain remedy to stop the blood, come from whatever quarter it may†; he is a very charming and a very learned man; his countenance does not indicate so much wisdom, for he is as much like Dupré as two drops of water are like each other. I beg you to inform me how madame de Grignan is, as a reward for my consultations. The marquis de Grignan has been to see me; he is certainly not so fat as he was; I congratulated him upon it very sincerely. His lady did me the honour to come here yesterday: I thought her so much improved, that she appeared to me quite a different being from what I had

† It has been seen elsewhere that this remedy was the root ipecacuanha.

formerly seen her; it is because she is grown fatter, and has a much better countenance; her eyes were so brilliant, that they dazzled me. She came at two, with her mother and sister; unfortunately for me, madame de Nevers rose as early in the morning as they did; she arrived a few moments after these ladies, who went away on her entrance. She told me, with much apparent sincerity, that she thought the marchioness very handsome. M. and madame de Chaulnes, and M. de Coulanges, arrive at Paris on Wednesday to dinner: I am to be at the hôtel de Chaulnes to receive them. The king is at Marly till Monday; the countess de Grammont is also there; but though she has caught the graces of novelty at court, she is not, poor woman, at all the better for it; all her pains are returned; she bears them with a courage and cheerfulness that astonish me, having lost, I believe, even the hope of a cure. The duchess de Villeroi receives her visits in bed, as pretty as it is possible to be: I did the honours of her chamber two days ago with the marshal's lady (de Villeroi). I have discovered in this little duchess a merit which raises her greatly in my estimation: she has so strong an attachment for mademoiselle de Grignan, that she is extremely interested in her welfare: she is continually asking me about her; she wishes her all the happiness she deserves, but she will not consent to her marriage with any one, unless she is sure to see her here; in short, she feels and thinks: this is one of the miracles Paulina has wrought. I have heard news of her; it is said, that you are going to have another wedding*; I am delighted at it, my friend; return then all together, life is too short for such long absence; the longest life seems only to be a few hours. I send you a letter from

* The marriage of mademoiselle de Grignan, who was to espouse the marquis de Simiane.

M. de Vannes, which has actually been three months in my writing-desk; I ask his pardon; but I am certain, that you will be as much pleased with it now, as at the time it was written. Adieu, my dearest; send me word quickly that you are coming back, and that you can no longer endure that the young marchioness de Grignan should live in such retirement; like me, she sighs for your return.

LETTER * MLXII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, November 18, 1695.

M. DE Lamoignon showed me a letter yesterday from the chevalier de Grignan, which informed me that your daughter is much better; I am delighted at it, and I wish with all my heart to hear of the continuance of this convalescence: I have the confidence to believe you will let me know it. This gives me the hope that we shall soon see you; indeed, there is nothing I so ardently desire: your return is necessary on many accounts; one of the principal is madame de Grignan; another, that her daughter-in-law is too much neglected here; a third, the return of M. de Sévigné, which draws near; these are weighty reasons, my dear, why you should come and see us! Paris is at present very full, but it will not be so, in my opinion, till you are among us. I long to hear whether madame de Grignan has made use of crab-broth, and whether it has been of service to her. There are excellent dinners and delightful parties every day at the hotel de Chaulnes, where your company is constantly desired. The marquis de Grignan did me the honour to call upon me two days ago; I thanked him for not being grown fat; he

appears to me highly pleased with the palace he inhabits. I hear from Lyons, that the charming Paulina is about to change her name; shall you not bring her with you? I can never love any one, but madame de Simiane, so much as I love mademoiselle de Grignan. Alas! talking of Simiane, poor M. de Langres † is at the point of death; I am quite uneasy about him. I believe M. Nicole is dead; he was seized with an apoplexy two days ago: Racine came with all speed, to give him some English drops, which recovered him; but I have just heard that he is relapsed; it will be a great loss. He has exhausted himself by writing; it is said, that he injured his head by his last book against the Quietists ‡; indeed they were not worth the pains. Adieu, my amiable; I am always impatient to hear from you, but still more so at present, on account of the state of madame de Grignan.

LETTER * MLXIII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SIMIANE.

The neighbourhood of Richelieu §, January 6, 1696.

I AM certainly very much gratified, madam, by the honour of your remembrance; but it seems to me, that you might have written to me in a less serious tone than you have done; I am consoled, however, because you date your letter from Vauréas ||, and you must

† Louis Marie Armand de Simiane de Gordes, bishop of Langres, died on the 21st of November, 1695.

‡ Nicole wrote on the quarrel between Bossuet and Fénélon; but opposed the latter with mildness and respect.

§ At madame de Louvois's.

|| A little town of the Venetian county, where madame de Simiane sometimes resided after her marriage.

know, I think, how much curiosity I have all my life had to see this beautiful town, without being able to satisfy it. And are you really, madam, residing at Vauréas? How happy you must be! And shall a man who has sojourned so long at Rome, be deprived of the pleasure of seeing it even for a quarter of an hour? but I will not despair of seeing it some day, since I hear that you have a palace there, very handsomely furnished. Do you not remember my attachment to one of madame de Grignan's servants, merely because he came from Vauréas; and how, in return, he considered it as a sacred duty to come and see me at Paris, where I had not the advantage of keeping him long, because Paris had no charms for him? Do you not also remember, when I was at Grignan, how happy I used to think those whom I saw going to, or returning from, that town? You will, therefore, suppose that when you are there, I shall not pity you. But enough of Vauréas. I must now tell you that I am very impatient to see you here, and become acquainted with the young handsome lord, whom you mention to me; but I am a little afraid he will be shocked at first at my old age, and my figure: I can assure you however, madam, that my presence is not yet prohibited at several good houses; I write this at the house of my *second wife;* she found me with so bad a cold, on my return from Versailles, where I have been spending a fortnight, that she will not trust to madame de Coulanges to cure it; for the last two nights, therefore, I have slept at her house; and, to all appearance, I shall sleep there several more, to be at the wedding of M. du Barbesieux, which will take place on Tuesday. I see nothing around me but jewels, magnificent dresses, linen incredibly fine, and a single set of ornaments for the head, worth 500 crowns. I see nothing but sumptuous re-

pasts; I hear nothing but exquisite music; in short, I am in an excellent house, where I always receive great honours and distinctions, and where I often hear myself called by the tender appellations of husband and father-in-law. I have an excellent apartment, comfortably warm, and very near the duchess de Villeroi's, where I take my *eau sucrée* before I go to bed. It is a long time since I wrote to madame de Sévigné, as well as to your mother; but I hope they will hear of me through you. While I am here, engaged in the wedding of my son de Barbesieux, madame de Coulanges is wasting her poor life in endeavouring to bring about the marriage of M. de Mornai and mademoiselle du Gué. I never saw a child so difficult to baptize; but it will be done some time or other, though I know not the day, nor the place where the nuptials will be solemnized; nothing is more whimsical than what passes between the blind man and his wife, who can never be of the same opinion; and madame de Coulanges and madame de Bagnols are also very different sisters. I know not whether I shall show my nose at this wedding; madame de Montchevreuil has told me, however, that it is necessary I should be at the entertainments that will be given at Versailles. But do you think my son's wedding my only engagement? Let me tell you, I have been at a gay dinner, at cardinal de Bouillon's, where I was formally invited, and treated with a distinction that was very flattering to my vanity. There were present all who bear the name of Bouillon, La Trémouille, and Créqui, and I was presented to mademoiselle de la Trémouille so particularly, that from her civilities and kindness I thought her the most lovely woman in the world. This is the effect of courtesy, joined to the best figure I ever beheld, and to high birth, which is sure to charm me; for you know I always had a taste for great fish. The

wedding-day is not yet fixed; it depends on the return of a courier, who is gone to Rome for a dispensation. When the marriage of madame de Seignelai and M. de Luxembourg will take place, is not yet known; every thing, however, is agreed upon, and nothing wanting but the consent of madame de Luxembourg. The marriage of mademoiselle de Monaco with the duke d'Usez, and that of the marquis de Jamson with mademoiselle de Virieu, are thought to be in good train. With respect to mademoiselle de Duras and M. de Lesdiguières, some bet that the match will take place, and others that it will not; but madame de Lesdiguières denies it so strongly, that she begins to be considered as the intended of M. de Mazarin: it will be curious if madame de Duras, by her good sense, should have profited cheaply by the extravagance of both, to establish her daughters so well. Marshal de Lorges has retired from the service, some say voluntarily, others not. The king has just made a thousand officers generals; I have the list of them before my eyes; I do not send it you, because your brother will probably not fail to do so: I was sorry not to see his name in it. I have seen your sister-in-law only once; unless you are all here, I do not consider that you will be much acquainted: but when shall you be here, ladies? Is your mother's health sufficiently established for us to believe what she says respecting the 1st of March? I was delighted to hear that madame de Sévigné has been running about the country; I like her star to agree with mine, which may well be called *wandering*. It would be difficult to employ better the second crop of youth, of which I am possessed: God grant that it may last a few years longer; but it is wonderful that I should not know what has become of the gout, which afflicted me so much two years ago; and for which you consoled

me by offering me your arm, that I might take some sort of exercise in my apartment. This letter carries me to a great length, as you see; but what can I do better than chat with you, my adorable Paulina, since I have leisure for it? Madame de Louvois is gone into the town; and, as the master of the house, I have staid within, by a very good fire, with all the implements before me necessary to write to you: she has also very opportunely left the duchess de Villeroi with me, that she may acquit herself of a compliment she has long wished to pay you. Cardinal de Bouillon likewise wished to congratulate you; and it is my fault that I have not kept him to it. The duchess de Villeroi too has often desired me to say a thousand things to you, and to your two mothers; and madame de Louvois the same. In short, ladies, not one of you is forgotten in this country; but it is time to conclude, and to assure you, madam, that this year differs from no preceding year in the respect and sincere friendship with which I am a thousand times more devoted to you than to any one in the world. The duchess de Villeroi will write to you, she says, with her fair hand.

FROM THE DUCHESS DE VILLEROI.

I HAVE long intended, madam, to congratulate you on your marriage, without having done so, which is owing to Coulanges, who always told me that we should write to you together; at length the happy moment is arrived, and I employ it, madam, in assuring you that I still preserve for you all the esteem and friendship which your high merits deserve.

LETTER *MLXIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Grignan, Wednesday, January 23, 1696.

I ANSWERED your last letter, sir, at the beginning of the year: this note, then, is only to request you to let M. de Barbeirac read the accompanying consultations on the state of my daughter's health; and to beg him to increase, if it be possible, his usual attention in giving us his opinion, which we highly value, and to send it us as soon as he possibly can. This, sir, is the request I have to make to your heart, which, I am sure, has not forgotten how much mine is alive to every thing that concerns my daughter: and, on so important an occasion, I believe I should offend you if I offered the least apology, or paid you the least compliment.

LETTER *MLXV.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, January 27, 1696.

I HOPE the letter I wrote to you this day week, was not ill received. I had a delightful little letter the next day, which gave me the more pleasure because, by telling me you should only write me one word for a thousand which I was to write to you in return, I found, that of my own good and free will, I had obliged you beforehand, and satisfied, it seems to me, every question you could ask me. To-day, my dear governess, my letter will not be so long, for it is not always

holiday. The new duchesses d'Usez and Lesdiguières have been presented to the king. The dowager duchess de Lesdiguières went to Versailles with all the Durases, and even slept there; and it is reported that his majesty treated them a little seriously, and that all he said was, that he wished the young duchess might be happy.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES.

I SHALL not write to you to-day, my dear; M. de Coulanges is much more deserving of this pleasure than I am; his youth allows him an intercourse with the world, which is a great ornament to his mind. He will give you an account of the ball at the Palace Royal, and of the finery of the beauties which composed this noble assembly. I saw madame de Barbesieux and the duchess de Villeroi, who appeared to me resplendent; diamonds, and the magnificence and brilliancy of gold and silver, deceive me, and prevent me from distinguishing beauty so well as when it is less loaded with ornaments. Madame de Mornai receives all the distinctions that follow favour, without appearing to be much alive to them; she will become more so, I hope, that she may at least find pleasure in what charms every other person. I saw M. de Pomponne the day before yesterday; we again talked of you, my dear friend, and of all that bears the name of Grignan; we complained affectionately of yours and madame de Grignan's long absence. I went afterwards to madame de Vins; I changed company without changing conversation; we concluded that madame de Grignan would only recover her health by coming to breathe the air of this country. Be assured, my dear madam, of this truth; think also sometimes how much the mar-

chioness de Grignan must be in want of her mother-in-law: if these reflections should oblige you to take the road to Paris, no one will profit by it so joyfully as I shall do. I ask the favour of you to say a thousand things for me to your daughter. Is it true, that madame de Simiane is with child? Nothing that concerns her can be indifferent to me; I have never seen a person who is so often thought of, or so sincerely praised; but I always say, Remembering her is not seeing her.

M. DE COULANGES, IN CONTINUATION.

Your friend has taken the place of Aurora to-day; I never saw her looking handsomer, nor with a complexion more indicative of health. This too is after experiments made the day before yesterday, of dining at the hotel de Chaulnes, and yesterday evening of supping at M. de Lamoignon's; in short, which is saying every thing, she ventured upon a slice, a small one indeed, of Amiens duck, and a drop of St. Laurent wine: is she not making great progress? But let us return to our folds: There was a grand ball on Friday at the Palace Royal, to which all the masques were admitted, and they introduced the usual confusion. I assisted madame de Coulanges in dressing mesdames de Villeroi and de Barbesieux, who completely dazzled me; I also saw, what madame de Coulanges did not see, mademoiselle de Tourpes with a velvet dress of flame colour, so magnificent that it defies all description. When the ladies (les maréchales) de Villeroi and d'Estrées, followed by these three infantas, had set out for madame de Louvois's, at eleven o'clock at night, to repair to the Palace Royal, I staid an hour and a half longer at lansquenet; and was then set down at my door by madame de Varangéville, and have not been out since.

I know, therefore, no more of the ball than madame de Coulanges. I dined with her, the day before yesterday, at the hotel de Chaulnes; and supped with her, last evening, at M. de Lamoignon's, where we met the beautiful duchess du Lude, the lady president Le Coigneux baked in an oven, the good duke de Chaulnes, and the excellent advocate-general d'Aguesseau*, who knows all my songs, and gets them by heart as if he had nothing else to do. I shall not return so soon to sleep with my *second wife*, because to-morrow I am to dine at the duchess du Lude's with cardinal de Bouillon; where I shall not fail to give all the compliments you charge me with. The marriage of the duke d'Albret and mademoiselle de la Trémouille, only depends now on a fever, which has attacked the duchess de Créqui; for the dispensation has arrived from Rome; but you may suppose that such a wedding requires the presence, or at least the better health, of a grandmother, who has contributed so much towards it. The marriage of M. de Luxembourg is still irremediably broken off; his conduct is highly blamed, and the more so, as it is believed to be a sacrifice he wishes to make to the marchioness de Bellefond. But madame de Seignelai has not merited such treatment: yet nothing would be said against the marchioness should she become a great duchess. It is certain that the duke has always been very attentive to her; and that the marchioness has always said that she should see M. de Luxembourg and madame de Seignelai go to church together to be married, without thinking, for all that, that the marriage would take place; which has even led the world to say, that she has been married to M. de Luxembourg for more than six months ago; and that M. de Luxem-

* Afterwards chancellor of France.

bourg, not daring to make it known to his mother, listened to the proposals that were made to him merely to gain time: with a little patience we shall know more. I was told, yesterday, that the marriage of little Saint Hérem with the little cousin of madame (la maréchale) de Lorges was concluded. That of mademoiselle de Clerembault with little Guémené is quite at an end. The duchess de Rohan has the small-pox, in Britany. This is all I know, my dearest governess. I have only, therefore, to embrace you with infinite affection, and to protest to you that I am more yours than my own. I request your good offices for me with your daughter, and all the illustrious inhabitants of your royal chateau. How is the chevalier? I ask his pardon, but I have no gout; and yet I drink, like a fish, of every sort of wine that can promote it. It is not so with M. de Nevers, who is at length returned from Nevers with his lovely wife, after having been at the point of death there. The humour of the gout, which lurks in all the secret channels of his body, gives him extraordinary complaints. He set out, the day before yesterday, for the neighbourhood of Rocheguyon, to consult *Christophe aux anes*, who is a labourer, but has admirable skill in the cure of all disorders, from his knowledge of simples, which he inherits from his father; and which, in default of children, he will leave to his nephew: in short, cancers, gravel, abscesses, ulcers, all fly before him; nothing is talked of but the wonderful cures he has performed, and of his disinterestedness. He gives medicines to the poor gratis; he makes the rich pay no more than their value for them; and asks no other reward than a crown, or half-a-crown, which he puts into a box for the poor. He will not come into this country, nor does he wish persons to build in his neigh-

bourhood. He has cured the duke de Grammont, and Turmenies; the latter sent him a hundred pistoles, which he immediately returned.

LETTER MLXVI.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, February 3, 1696.

The reports we hear of the continuance of madame de Grignan's ill health, afflict me to such a degree, both on your account, my dear governess, and on hers, that I have not the heart to send you the second volume of our weddings. Letters are only agreeable according to the time in which they arrive; make, therefore, of this the use which may be suitable to its season, and be firmly assured, whatever style I may adopt, that my heart does its duty as to every thing that concerns you and the excellent countess. After this, I will tell you that the marriage of the duke d'Albret and mademoiselle de la Trémouille took place on Tuesday evening; and that it would certainly have been a more joyful one, but for the illness of the duchess de Créqui, which has increased from that period; for even yesterday she was in danger; I have not yet heard how she is to-day. The hotel de Créqui, however, was splendidly furnished and illuminated; there were two tables of fifteen or sixteen covers each, so well and so delicately served, that it is even said that they surpassed those at M. de Barbesieux's wedding. The young people, to amuse themselves, danced to songs, a custom which is now very much in vogue at court; whoever chose played at cards, and whoever chose listened to a pretty concert by Vizé, Marais, Descôteaux, and Philibert: this lasted till

midnight; the marriage was celebrated in the chapel of the hotel de Créqui. There were more friends than relations at this wedding; this also is a custom introduced for the sake of the consequences; and I can tell you that I was scolded for not being there; but I had rather be scolded on such an occasion, than run the risk of being as welcome as a dog at a game of nine pins. I saw all the bride-folks next morning, and was well received by all the Bouillons and Trémouilles. The door of the hotel de Créqui has only been open to the public on account of the visits of Monsieur and Madame, and of their children, who did not fail upon this occasion to compliment their near relations: till this lucky moment it was shut to all who presented themselves, because of madame de Créqui's illness: the lady visitors are consoled by this, for the trouble it gave them to equip themselves in their black dresses, half repugnance, and half laziness. Mademoiselle de Villars, daughter of the poor duchess of this name, on the same day married her cousin de Brancas*. But these are not the only marriages: M. and madame de Clérembault laid such good hold of M. de Luxembourg, as soon as he had broken with madame de Seignelai, that at length the marriage is fixed. Mademoiselle de Clérembault† is to have 500,000 francs now, and 100,000 in jewels, to be valued by three of the most famous jewellers of Paris. I saw some persons, yesterday, who were present at madame de Clérembault's, at the visit she received from M. de Luxembourg, his mother, and his whole family; so that the affair is ab-

* Afterwards marshal of France, and a Spanish grandee of the first class.

† Marie Gillonne Gillier, second wife of Charles Francis de Montmorenci duke of Luxembourg, and only daughter of René Gillier, marquis de Clérembault, and of Marie le Loup de Bellenave.

solutely concluded; I know not what the marchioness de Bellefond will say upon the subject; but thus the Clérembaults are consoled. The public wishes madame de Seignelai to enter into some negociation with M. de Marsan; I speak only from report. The young St. Hérem is on Sunday to marry the little cousin of madame (la maréchale) de Lorges. The duchess de S. S**** is always pregnant, and proves thereby that there is nothing impossible in this world. But can you guess who is entering my room? The marquis de Grignan in person, who has had the goodness to honour my levee, weary, as he says, of seeking for me in vain in the afternoon: is not this very obliging? To reward him for his trouble, I shall take him to dine some day at cardinal de Bouillon's, who has but one cry after him, on account, ladies, of you, and of all who bear the name of Grignan, whom he loves and honours. We went together (that is, the cardinal and I) to a wonderful dinner at the duchess du Lude's, last Sunday, where I enumerated to the cardinal all your compliments, which he received with infinite joy and gratitude. I am charged to give you a great many from him, till we meet together quietly at Saint Martin's, to write to you jointly in the same letter, as he has long intended to do. Have you heard that he has advised so well with the king and his monks, that he believes the exchange of his mansion-house of Saint Martin against another in Pontoise for the monks who will succeed him, certain? In like manner, he made a noble present of his beautiful house and gardens to the duke d'Albret, the day after his marriage, by a settlement in form, to come to him after his death; with this reserve, that it is to be a residence for the duchess his wife, as long as she remains a widow: it is their interest, however, that the cardinal should enjoy it long;

for, considering it as a fund secured to his heirs, he will never be very extravagant there. The count du Lude†, to whom the king, according to the promise he made to the late marshal de Luxembourg, has granted a duke's brevet, is still, it is said, to marry mademoiselle de B*** with 100,000 francs down, and 300,000 in reversion; but the marriage has not yet taken place‡; the lady does not appear to me very agreeable; and the family of Luxembourg, it is also said, are not very much delighted at the alliance. This, ladies, is all I have to tell you; but, for Heaven's sake, send me some good tidings of the health of our countess, if you wish me to continue my long letters. I saw the good La Troche, the day before yesterday, who is much better. Our amiable Enclos has a cold, which does not please me: indeed, colds are prevalent every where. Madame de Soubise has been a great sufferer; but adieu, I am going to dine at the hotel de Chaulnes. I have hitherto expected, in vain, a summons from my cardinal to sleep at Pontoise; but the illness of madame de Créqui may have detained him; he was not very well himself; this will make me take the road of the faubourg St. Germain after dinner. On Friday next, if my wandering star permits, you shall have the rest.

† Paul Sigismond de Montmorenci Luxembourg, afterwards duke de Chatillon.

‡ This marriage did not take place. On the 6th of March following, the duke de Chatillon married Marie Antoine de la Trémouille, marchioness de Royan, countess d'Olonne.

LETTER *MLXVII.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Grignan, Saturday, February 4, 1696.

I was right, sir, when I supposed you would be concerned at my anxiety, and would use all the diligence in your power to relieve it. M. Barbeirac's prescription and your letter had wings, as you wished; and it seems that this little fever, which appeared so low, had wings too, for it vanished at the bare mention of M. Barbeirac's name. Seriously, sir, there is something miraculous in this sudden change; and I cannot doubt that your wishes and your prayers contributed to produce it. Judge of my gratitude by their effect. My daughter goes halves with me in all I say here: she returns you a thousand thanks, and entreats you to give a great many to M. Barbeirac. We are happy in having no longer any thing to do, but to take patience and rhubarb, which she finds agree well with her. We doubt not that in this quiet state, rhubarb is a medicine which M. Barbeirac must approve, with a regimen, which is sometimes better than all. Thank God, sir, both for yourself and for us; for we are certain that you are interested in this acknowledgement; and then, sir, cast your eyes upon all the inhabitants of this chateau, and judge of their sentiments for you.

LETTER * MLXVIII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Saint Martin's, February 27, 1696.

But why not write to me sometimes *in folio*, when you meet with a large noble sheet that invites you to do so? I have received the long and short letter you had the goodness to write me on the same day in answer to all mine; and I am still, my dear governess, delighted with your style, and your good and faithful correspondence. I have been here almost a fortnight with my adored cardinal, and for almost a fortnight I have been the happiest man in the world; good society, good fires every where, a thousand games, a noble table, delicious wines: in short, this is literally the land of plenty. The very servants of this house have a rage for improvements, though they are masters of their art; so that they will make us burst at last. They were supremely skilled in the most excellent ragoûts of France and Italy; yet have they bound themselves apprentices to the best cook in England, to become more expert in English ragouts than he. We no longer know where we are; all our ragouts speak different languages; but they make themselves so well understood, that we eat them in whatever shape and in whatever sauce they present themselves. You see plainly, madam, that the single article of good cheer would require a *folio*. Indeed, this is an admirable house, and the master of it cannot be sufficiently adored: I have not failed to make him all your compliments; and I only write to you from hence, because I believe the moment arrived in which he can answer you for himself, as he has often expressed a desire to do. We

have had a great many brothers, nephews, and nieces here during the last week; but, since Monday, the cardinal is reduced to his two faithful companions: the worthy Richard Hamilton for one, and the young Coulanges for the other; and you cannot imagine how well he reconciles himself to his solitude; so well, indeed, that we hear no more of what passes at Paris and at court, than if we were at La Trappe. This, therefore, is a separate volume from the rest of my letters; from my ignorance, whether all the fixed marriages have been solemnized, or the proposed ones have taken place, or are in a fair way to do so. You heard that madame de Créqui was at the point of death, and you afterwards heard of her resurrection, which gave extreme joy to the cardinal; her long life being very necessary to the happiness of the duke and duchess d'Albret; and it is since this resurrection that the cardinal has renounced the news of the world to attend to himself, and to an infinite number of workmen, who are labouring incessantly to complete one of the most beautiful gardens in Europe. I am delighted at the better health of our countess: her having wished to read my letters herself, and to give them their proper tones and emphasis, is a very good sign of life. You assure me that she laughed heartily at some passages, and that the president's lady who was *baked* did not displease her. But I cannot help wondering, my dear ladies, that you, who are so conversant in history, and so well informed with respect to the noble houses of France, should not know that the house of Dou**** is divided into two branches; that one produced the young marchioness de S. Hé***, and the other the lady whom M. de P**** has just espoused; so that they were two cousins-german, married almost at the same time. One, a brilliant beauty, the daughter of a Fré***, who gave her a

madame (la maréchale) de Lorges for cousin-german, and the duchesses de Saint Simon and de Lauzun for nieces, after the mode of Britany, entered into the house of Mont***. The other, less ambitious, was content with that of the house of Ber***, though her mother had married again to M. de l'H***, and thus is the enigma, the solution of which you have required of me, developed. We have still two months to remain here, they will pass rapidly; as soon as I am at Paris, I shall renew my correspondence, and give you the continuation of the preceding volumes. I wish you may find in it the marriage of mademoiselle de Bagnols and M. de Poissi; but this child is so difficult to baptize, that I dare not hope for the conclusion, though I have been informed that the affair was in good train. Adieu, ladies; I am going to place my paper before cardinal de Bouillon, that he may illuminate, at least, the remainder of this page, and so give a value to the letter above what it at present possesses. A thousand compliments, I entreat you, and a thousand respects, to all the inhabitants of your royal chateau. Madame de Simiane is welcome to leave my letters unanswered; but I could at least have wished to receive some commands from her to the duchess de Villeroi, who wrote to her so prettily in my letter, and who inquires for her daily.

FROM THE CARDINAL DE BOUILLON.

It is less humiliating to me, madam, to own ingenuously the fault I have committed, in having given no sign of life, on the occasion of the two happy marriages, either to you, or to any of the family of Grignan; all of whom I love and honour infinitely: it is less humiliating, I say, to own this, than to attempt to add

any thing to M. de Coulanges's letter, which is worthy both of you and of him. I must, however, assure you that you have not a servant in the world who is more truly devoted to you than I am.

M. DE COULANGES CONTINUED.

Our cousin de Pracontal is on the point of setting out for Montélimart: she will pay you a visit, and will have no desire to renounce her relations; her mother had never told her we were of them, and, but for me, she would still be ignorant of it. She is a very charming woman; she is to spend some months in the country, for which I am sorry, for I began to like her extremely: her husband also is not without merit; but he will not suffer her out of his sight. If this proceeds from affection, I have nothing to say against it, though such affection is sometimes very inconvenient: if from jealousy, it is the result of madame de Montchevreuil's devotion to her daughter, whose fault it has not been that she has not ruined her with her husband, and with every one else. I am certain you will find our cousin a very reasonable being; that you will like her much, and will not be sorry to display to her all the magnificence of Grignan. She has desired me to say a good word for her; and I beg you will tell her, when you see her, that I have done so both in terms of affection and praise. Her husband will fix her near Lyons, during the campaign, with madame Busseaux, her sister-in-law.

LETTER * MLXIX.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MESDAMES DE SÉVIGNÉ AND DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, February 20, 1696.

I [illegible] skiff after the ship that has left Saint Martin's to tell you, in the first place, that I am arrived here; and that I received on Saturday evening, at the time I least expected it, letters upon letters, informing me that madame de Louvois was attacked with colic last Tuesday; that the fits had been so violent and painful, that the last, which took place on Friday evening, had occasioned great alarm, and brought together all her relations and friends. I therefore, without a moment's hesitation, left Saint Martin's yesterday, at four o'clock in the morning, to repair to her and to my duty. I found her very much weakened, but freed from violent pain, by bleeding and the medicines that had been administered. She is obliged, however, to keep in bed without moving, and even without talking much, for fear of increasing the pains she constantly feels, but which are less difficult to bear than those which come by fits. You thus see, ladies, that every one in this world has his sorrows and miseries. I was very well received, and my zeal was highly commended. Though this illness does not appear to be dangerous, for madame de Louvois was much better yesterday, towards midnight, I shall be detained here for a few days at least. I was very sorry to be obliged to leave Saint Martin's, because on Saturday, after dinner, the duke and duchess d'Albret very unceremoniously and very kindly came to surprise the cardinal, against his orders; for he did not wish the

duchess to see Saint Martin's before the spring: this is the whim of a master of a house, which you can very easily understand: but he was not sorry, however, for the surprise, which made him determine upon staying two days longer to explain to them at least all that would embellish his house and gardens at the ensuing season, and I was very necessary to second him. The new-married folks would have been delighted [illegible] me, and yesterday was set apart, between the [illegible] the pans, to form an intimate acquaintance with the duchess, who is so shaped, so courteous, so polite, so well-educated, that she is in my eyes a finished beauty, though she is far from handsome, and has only to boast the finest and most dignified figure that was [illegible] This, ladies, is the first part of my discourse [illegible] would not, however, dispatch the skiff, if the second, that of making honourable reparation as speedily as possible to madame de Simiane, did not press hard upon me. I spent yesterday with the duchess de Villeroi, who, asking me if I had not heard from her, told me she had received a very delightful answer from her; I immediately thanked the duchess for having informed me of the good news, and explained to her the reason; for I did not like that madame de Simiane should be no longer the exact and punctual Paulina: I am delighted, as you may suppose, that she retains all her perfections; and I ask pardon for having suspected her of this peccadillo. The duchess de Villeroi grows very handsome and very lovely; I was therefore sorry that the flint did not strike fire. I have found the mania for marriage raging here: to-morrow that of M. de Marsan and madame de Seignelai will take place; they mutually club their furniture, and the possession of 100,000 livres a year is settled on the survivor, in case there should be no children. The public loudly

blames madame de Seignelai; many think that to be her own mistress, and to enjoy an income of 70,000 livres a year, was a very happy lot; while others forgive her for having wished to resign it for the distinguished rank she will hold, and for a husband with whom, they are sure, she will live happily. After [illegible] wished to marry M. de Luxembourg, she would [illegible] been thought the better of for passing the rest [illegible] of her days in widowhood; and her intention, no doubt, has been, to console herself and her family at the same time. To-morrow, at midnight, this grand ceremony will be performed. The marriage of Villacerf's son with mademoiselle de Senne[illegible] also take place to-morrow. We do not [illegible]erstand the humour of M. and madame de [illegible] taste, who give up 50,000 crowns; but this is how every thing goes in this world. The marriage of mademoiselle de Royan with the count de Lude, now duke de Chatillon, is confirmed. A match is also talked of between mademoiselle de Bosmelet and the young duke de la Force, who might well pass for her son. On my arrival here, I found the marriage of mademoiselle de Bagnols and M. de Poissi turned a little aside, I know not by whose fault; there are a pro and a con in all this. Adieu, ladies; I adore and embrace you.

LETTER *MLXX.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SIMIANE.

Paris, February 27, 1696.

You are deficient in nothing, divine Paulina, and I ask your pardon for having suspected your punctuality, as I did. I shall take care, in future, how I commit the

same egregious fault. I will not pass for a peevish little man with you; and you may write again at your ease, and sometimes even not answer me at all, without my feeling offended. Some slight correspondence must take place between us, to keep up our acquaintance; but it must be free, and you may employ it when the fancy takes you: is not this well said? I have been at Paris for a week, devoting almost all my time to madame de Louvois, who is indeed free from gout, but who has been so badly managed, and is so oppressed with vapours, that she recovers slowly. The Portuguese ambassador yesterday made his solemn entrance at Paris, through the gate Saint Antoine, and went round the Place Royale: the poor people of Paris are so greedy of spectacles, that this entry, which would not have been regarded at another time, was quite a treat to them. The ambassador's livery is grey with silver lace, turned up with blue; he has four beautiful carriages; and, to the disgrace of France, these carriages and horses were sent to compose his retinue. Notwithstanding this, it was impossible to stir in the streets for the concourse of people. The Place Royale, with carpets at every window and in every balcony, was not one of the worst places in the city to show to the ambassador: he therefore made the circuit of it; saw a beautiful and noble company on the balcony of the hotel de Chaulnes, where cardinal de Bouillon, the duchesses de la Trémouille and d'Albret, madame de Coulanges, the abbé Têtu, the abbé d'Auvergne, count d'Albret, and I, had dined; and where many other persons of consequence repaired, after dinner, to view the sight; among others, the chevalier de Bouillon, who was presented to your friend madame de Coulanges, and whom she was obliged to kiss, as a very extraordinary man. I am now going to dine at Montmartre,

where M. and madame de Nevers, more beautiful and more lovely than ever, have made an appointment with me. I suppose I shall not be very hungry when I return. I must not, however, fail to be at M. de Lamoignon's this evening, even if I were to burst for it. Say a word of the life I lead, to the chevalier de [illegible] for it gives such offence to the gouty, that [illegible] misfortune they do not wish me. M. de Saint-Aignan was lately so much offended at seeing me insolently stamp with my foot, at a time when he could not move for the gout, that he would have strangled me if he could. Nothing certainly is more extraordinary than the young and flourishing state I enjoy: you lose a great deal in not being here to see me; how we would dance together to the songs! It is a fashionable amusement. M. and madame de Marsan are gone to Versailles; nothing is equal to their happiness: but are not you, divine Paulina, happy indeed, in not having married M. de Lauzun, who, without rhyme or reason, has fixed his wife there? We hear stories of him without end, and which I have not time to write to you. The marriage of the new duke de Châtillon and mademoiselle de Royan is to take place on Shrove Monday. The good madame de Bouteville * has sent her jewels, to the amount of a thousand francs. There is not a happier marriage than M. de Luxembourg's, who has lost his grand-daughter by the first marriage, to the great satisfaction of those who inherit after her. M. and madame de Pracontal set out on Sunday to see you. I recommend madame de Pracontal to you, who is our cousin, and whom I love as my life; I am very much

* Elizabeth Angelique de Vienne, grandmother of the duke de Châtillon, was the widow of Francis de Montmorenci, count de Bouteville: she died on the 6th of August following, at the age of eighty-nine, having passed sixty-nine years in widowhood.

grieved at her quitting us; you will find her an amiable woman and an excellent companion. She will spend much of her time out of Paris, or I am greatly mistaken. M. de Marillac has lost a brother-abbé. Monseigneur is at Meudon. The king goes on Wednesday to Marly; and the jubilee, against wind and tide, will begin next Sunday, which is a great grief to those who are accustomed to pass the three days of Shrovetide otherwise than in prayer. Father de la Ferté, a jesuit, who preached with great success much beyond his age and rank, has, by a laudable zeal, which proves his vocation, obtained permission from his superiors to go into Canada†. Adieu, lovely and divine Paulina; I have nothing more to add. I am delighted at your mother's better health; but we dare not flatter ourselves that we shall see her here till the end of autumn, and this is plunging us into Lent at once.

LETTER *MLXXI.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Grignan, February 29, 1696.

You are not yet quit of us, sir. It is easier to have no correspondence with us, than to put a stop to that I have established, slight as it may be. I feel as if civility obliged me to tell you, that we are very sorry that at the time we were so ill (for I always speak in the plural) you took the liberty to be ill also. We feel too that we owe to rhubarb, to which we consider ourselves so much obliged, this justice, at least, of not

† Father de la Ferté did not take advantage of the permission of his superiors, on account of the objection of his relations.

suffering it to be condemned without being heard: this is what I have done in the note I send to M. Barbeirac. I have not added your name, sir, from modesty; but from the friendship I entertain for you, and that which I flatter myself you entertain for us, I do not seal the note, and I entreat you to have the goodness to read it, and to make M. Barbeirac understand it; for I do not write methodically, and you alone can explain it. Have, therefore, this charity, sir; you will not seek far to find in your own heart all the goodness which is necessary to make you excuse such liberties. I have a third reason for writing to you. I must send you a letter which I have cheated our dear Corbinelli's philosophy out of: he has given me the name of *reprobate*, which I had forgotten, and which you so well deserved. Adieu, then, illustrious *reprobate*; never was such a character so perfectly esteemed by mother and daughter, as it is in you. It is a taste which you will renew, as soon as we see one of your letters, however short; and the least sentence of which will present to us again a style that has so peculiarly found the secret of pleasing us.

LETTER *MLXXII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MESDAMES DE SÉVIGNÉ AND DE GRIGNAN.

Paris, March 14, 1696.

THE *folio* has brought me a very good *quarto*; I received it the day before yesterday, just in time to communicate its contents to my good cardinal, who repaired to my *lever* (time of rising) at the moment I least expected it: he was delighted with your letter; and what civil things did he not say of you, and of all who bear the name of Grignan! Be you all

assured, that if ever you return to this country, as I flatter myself you will, we shall show you Saint Martin's in all its extent, and with all its unparalleled beauties. But what think you, ladies, brought the worthy cardinal to me so early? Alas! it was to propose my return with him, and that we should go and mortify ourselves together in that charming place. But that I might duly perform my jubilee, which will not be complete till Saturday morning, it was necessary to resist this proposition courageously; and I am now fasting, in sackcloth and ashes, till Saturday after dinner, when a little chaise will take me swiftly to Pontoise, where I hope to spend some time, and where I shall wish for you incessantly. In the midst, however, of my sackcloth and ashes, I must sup this evening at Penautier's*, where I cannot and will not fail, as M. and madame de Marsan are to be of the party; and I shall be delighted to drink, and renew my acquaintance, with them. The duchess du Lude, and all the Lamoignons, are also to be there: how, therefore, can I excuse myself? I refer the matter, most excellent governess, to yourself.

To proceed: our hôtel de Chaulnes shines as much during Lent, as it shone during the feast-days; they certainly live there in style. The good duke still goes heavily on his way; but it is to be hoped that Vichi, if he goes there, will lighten his portmanteau, which is certainly too full, as well as mine; but as I am younger than he, and take more exercise, I am less inconvenienced. As we shall have been a long time without seeing each other, I fear, ladies, that when you come here, you will find me of an enormous size; but what

* Receiver-general of the clergy of France, whose house was famous for good cheer.

of that? you will not think me less welcome, nor less bound to love and honour you all my life. I saw goody La Troche the day before yesterday, who is collecting all the waste paper in the world to send to you; and we had very nearly quarrelled, because I told her it was not necessary; and that she should leave it to the abbé Bigorré, the most exact and regular correspondent in the world; and that it was making you pay postage, which it would be better to spare you: am I right? am I wrong? I suppose the news of the visionary armies in Britany reached you long ago, and that you laugh at the gravity with which M. de Lavardin has reported this vision at court: I was unwilling, therefore, to send you any account of it, as well as of a thousand songs which are in circulation, each more vile and ridiculous than the preceding one: as I have no share in them, I do not burthen myself with such merchandise, and particularly in this holy time of Lent.

But madame du Pui-du-Fou is dead; ought I not to condole with M. de Grignan* in form upon the event? I beg you to say for me every thing that is necessary upon the occasion; and to tell him how much I am alive to all the good and ill that happens to him. I saw the duchess dowager de Lesdiguières at the hôtel de Chaulnes, more brilliant than ever: I asked her, if the door of her house would never be open to me? and from the tone she assumed, you would have said that it was my fault if I did not see her often, and that I had only to present myself at this door for it to open immediately: and yet her daughter-in-law is in greater seclusion than ever. She has one of the most disagreeable faces I know; I prefer, a thousand times, the duchess

* M. de Grignan's second wife was the daughter of madame du Pui-du Fou.

d'Albret, who has the carriage and figure of a divinity. The duchess de Richelieu has been so ill lately, of a violent cold attended with fever and an alarming cough, that she has lain in of a seven months' child; it is a lively boy, however, and delights the duke his father, as much as he afflicts the marquis de Richelieu: but will he live? it is very doubtful. We have no good news from England; we run the risk of seeing king James shortly. It is affirmed, that the prince of Orange has always been very well informed; and that he has not appeared to be so, to draw us into the snare. His fleet was yesterday so near Calais, that it was expected every moment that it would set fire to all the ships, and bombard the town. This fatal moment depended on the tide; it is said that all our frigates are safe under the battery of Dunkirk: we shall soon know more.

Adieu, ladies; this is all you will have to-day: and it is a great deal, whatever you may say; for my letters are not so wonderful as you wish to make me believe. Be assured, I still expect you here with great impatience. Fie, fie, upon the calf's head, feet, and tripe! can any thing be more indigestible? Believe me, my dear governess, it is a very unreasonable attachment you have formed for this dish; and I advise you, for your health's sake, to get rid of it as soon as possible. I pardon madame de Simiane for not having written to me on Shrove-Tuesday; I can easily conceive how busy she must have been on that day, to shine at the ball, and to lay down the law to all the ladies of Vaurèas. I am very much flattered by her wishing to honour me with a more affectionate appellation than that of *sir*; I had resolved to ask her to call me *Pierrot*, instead of it. Let her baptize me with any name her friendship may suggest; and let her be assured I deserve some distinction, on account of the

respect and admiration I entertain for the prudent Paulina. Sanzei sends you a thousand compliments, and a thousand thanks for the honour of your remembrance, in whatever shape it be: he has done his day's work so well, that M. de Saint Amand's is become his own house; he is there from morning to night. I cannot say enough of the ruin of the family of Saint H**** †; they owe 400,000 francs more than they declared: they could willingly stone madame de Saint H****, when they discover new articles of expense, which they had never before heard of. The young people are going to renounce every thing, and to depend solely upon the reversion of the government of F****, and their commission, which they retain. M. de Saint Amand has married his daughter much better than M. D****; but look at the *Mercure Galant* for February, and you will see what the house of D**** is. Your friend looks forward to Friday, but says a thousand things to you in the mean while. Madame de Créqui set out post yesterday, to fly to her beloved son Blanchefort, who is ill at Tournay.

LETTER *MLXXIII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, March 19, 1696.

HERE ends the chapter of marriages, and begins the chapter of deaths. Madame de Guise ‡ departed this

† These initials signify Saint Herem; and the F** *, that follows, is Fontainbleau, of which M. de Saint Herem was governor.

‡ Elizabeth d'Orléans, daughter of Gaston de France, duke of Orléans, uncle of Lewis XIV., by Marguerite de Lorraine Vaudemont, his second wife. She was born on the 26th of December, 1646, and was married in 1676 to Louis Joseph, duke de Guise.

world on Saturday, towards midnight. She was only taken ill on the Tuesday, of a violent fever and inflammation on the lungs; it was scarcely possible to be taken off more rapidly. She died at Versailles, in full possession of her senses, and in perfect resignation: the king saw her two hours before she died: after a tolerably long conversation, he left the room overwhelmed with grief, and bathed in tears; and the next day, that is yesterday, he set out for Marly, where he will remain till Saturday evening. Poor madame de Créqui must have found a messenger upon the road, who prevented her from going to Tournay. Her son died there at the age of twenty-seven, with unparalleled courage: it is a great loss to his family, and particularly to his mother, who will die of grief, if grief can kill; and madame du Plessis Bellière will die, if her daughter dies.

But do you know who died suddenly yesterday? M. de Saint-Géran. He went to confession on Wednesday, intending to complete his jubilee yesterday; he fasted on Friday and Saturday for this purpose; and yesterday morning, without illness or pain of any kind, he went to St. Paul's, his parish-church. As he was in the confessional, he suddenly fell down; assistance was given him, and every remedy that could be administered in a church; but his senses not returning, he was carried to the house of an apothecary opposite the great gate of St. Paul's, and he died as he entered it. As soon as I heard the melancholy intelligence, I went to his house, and found that he had breathed his last: he will be buried this evening, at St. Paul's; and to-morrow I intend going to Versailles, to pay my duty to madame de Saint-Géran, who, in all probability, will console herself for his loss, and will not perhaps bear the thought of being deprived for a time of playing day

and night at lansquenet, as she has done for some years. Our friend has always lived from day to day, without bestowing a thought upon the future. God grant she may find it answer in the end; but I do not think mademoiselle de Saint-Géran will ever be a great heiress.

I know not how the affairs of England go on; the countess de Fiesque is the only one who has a good opinion of them, and is still certain that they will end well. I have taken three meals at the Marsans', which agree very well with me; I shall put their whole family into my basket. M. de Marsan always reminds his wife that she is no longer madame de Seignelai; and that, being only madame de Marsan, she must accommodate herself to all his friends, of whatever form or rank, and let every one live after his own way. I am to go on Saturday to Saint Martin's; and to-morrow I shall go to Versailles, to condole with my friend, and pass the day with mesdames de Villeroi and mademoiselle de Bouillon, whom I shall find there. Madame de Guise has ordered her funeral to be conducted without ceremony, and has preferred the burial-ground of the Carmelites of the great convent, to all the pomp of Saint Denis, with the kings her ancestors: she was only forty-nine years of age. Father de la Ferté will preach again on Wednesday; and on Friday, without saying a word, he will set off for Canada. If he were not to take his departure in this way, it would cause a tumult, he is so much liked by the populace: the church of the Jesuits was too small for the multitude which crowded to his sermons.

I have just been dining at the hôtel de Chaulnes, where I met the marquis de Grignan: he can tell you that I was not in a very ill humour. Madame (la maréchale) de Villeroi yesterday announced to madame de Saint-Géran the death of her husband; and

the duke has taken upon himself the charge of the funeral this evening: he will probably be the privileged creditor on the inheritance; for he will advance, no doubt, what is necessary for the ceremony. This is all I know, madam; I therefore conclude, and take leave of you till my return from Saint Martin's, which will be when it pleases God. Madame de Coulanges is free from the colic; she only complains that she has sometimes the *little colic*, which does not prevent her from eating and drinking, and associating with the young: she is very partial to the chevalier de Bouillon and count d'Albret; and she was delighted to meet M. de Marsan again, with whom she has renewed a snuff acquaintance. Winter is come back within these two days; it has snowed, and frozen in such a manner, that we must expect no apricots; I fear the peaches also will suffer. Madame de Frontenac has a violent cold and fever; the fashion of dying, alarms us for her. Our poor l'Enclos has also a slow fever, which returns slightly every evening, with a sore throat, that makes her friends uneasy; in short, I very much fear that the work of death is not at an end.

LETTER *MLXXIV.

FROM MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ TO M. DE COULANGES †.

Grignan, March 29, 1696.

When I have no other employment, I weep and bewail aloud the death of Blanchefort, that amiable, that excellent youth, who was held up to all our young people as a model for imitation. A reputation completely esta-

† As the death of madame de Sévigné happened in the beginning of April, it is probable that this letter is the last she wrote. We consider its recovery as a fortunate circumstance.

blished, valour acknowledged and worthy of his name, a disposition happy for himself, (for a bad disposition is a torment to its possessor), for his friends, and for his family; alive to the affection of his mother and his grandmother, loving them, honouring them, appreciating their merit, taking pleasure in proving to them his gratitude, and thereby repaying them for their extreme affection; uniting good sense with a fine person; not vain of his youth, as most young people are, who seem to think themselves paragons of perfection:—and this dear boy, with all his perfections, gone in a moment, like a blossom borne away by the wind, without being in battle, without having an opportunity to fight, and without breathing even an unhealthy air! Where, my dear cousin, can we find words to express our ideas of the grief of these two mothers, and to convey to them an adequate sense of what we feel here? We do not think of writing to them; but if at any time you should have an opportunity of mentioning my daughter, and me, and the Grignans, make known our regret at this irreparable misfortune. Madame de Vins has lost every thing, I own *; for when the heart has chosen between two sons, one only is seen. I can talk of nothing else. I bow in reverence to the holy and modest tomb of madame de Guise, whose renunciation of that of the kings her ancestors, merits an eternal crown. I think M. de Saint-Géran happy indeed; and so I think you, for having to comfort his wife: say to her for us every thing you think proper. And as for madame de Miramion, that mother of the church, she will be a public loss. Adieu, my dear cousin, I cannot change my tone. You have finished your jubilee. The delightful trip to Saint Martin's has closely followed the

* Madame de Vins had lost an only son.

sackcloth and ashes you mentioned to me. The happiness M. and madame de Marsan are now enjoying, well deserves that you should sometimes see them, and put them into your basket; and I deserve a place in that in which you put those who love you; but I fear, that for them you have no basket.

LETTER * MLXXV.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SÉVIGNÉ.

Paris, April 6, 1696.

I SHALL show your letter to madame de Créqui; the only pleasure she has left, is to hear the praises of her poor son †; she appears to me more afflicted than at first. I pass few days without seeing her. I have sent this delightful and affectionate letter to M. de Coulanges; he is at Saint Martin's, from whence he is to return on Tuesday. Madame de Saint-Géran has received two visits from madame de Maintenon; you will suppose that she did not require so much as this to comfort her. Madame de Mornai is still with madame de Maintenon; the more insensible this little woman appears to the honours she receives, the more attention seems to be paid her: I am astonished at this conduct on both sides. The marriage of my niece to M. de Poissi ‡ is completely at an end; she will set out for Flanders in a week. M. and madame de Bagnols are not to blame; madame de Maisons § did also what she

† Nicholas Charles de Créqui, marquis de Blanchefort, died at Tournay on the 16th of March, 1696, at the age of twenty-seven.

‡ Claude Longueil, marquis de Poissi and de Maisons, president à mortier in the parliament of Paris.

§ Louisa Ficubet, mother of M. de Poissi.

could; and we shall always think ourselves highly obliged to her. I am delighted at being acquainted with her: she has a good heart, and true generosity. We must hope our young lady will be well married*; but it cannot be till the return of the campaign, for no gownsman will now suit us. I must finish this little note as speedily as possible, for madame de Montespan is coming to take me at day-break to hear father de la Ferté (a Jesuit), who preaches like a Bourdaloue, and who resembles the duke his brother so much, that it is impossible to help laughing at the discourses they hold together. Madame de Fontevrauld† is also coming; I hear many sermons in company with these great folks, who are to set out in a week for Bourbon. The more slowly madame de Grignan recovers where she is, the more reason there is that she should change the air with all speed; exclusive of the interest I have in giving this advice, it is the opinion of all judicious persons. When, too, shall we again see madame de Simiane? She cares little about it; she has amusement in abundance, while we sigh for her here. Be assured, my love, I shall not fail to give your compliments, and those of M. and madame de Grignan, to madame de Créqui. The king has made a present of two thousand louis to marshal de Choiseul, to assist him in the expenses of his equipage: I know not whether the marquis de Grignan will go with him. Adieu, my true friend, a hasty adieu; I am called away.

* She was married in 1699 to the count de Tillières.

† Sister of madame de Montespan.

LETTER *MLXXVI.

FROM THE COUNTESS DE GRIGNAN TO THE PRESIDENT DE MOULCEAU.

Paris, April 18, 1696.

Your politeness, sir, need not lead you to fear the renewal of my grief †, in speaking to me of the afflicting loss I have sustained. This is an object which my mind bears constantly in view, and which is so deeply engraven in my heart, that nothing has power to increase or diminish it. I am convinced, sir, that you could not have heard the dreadful misfortune which has happened to me, without shedding tears; I can answer for your heart: you lose a friend of incomparable merit and fidelity; nothing is more worthy of your regret; and what, sir, do not I lose? what perfections were not united in her, to render her to me, by different characters, most dear and most precious? A loss so complete and so irreparable, leads me to seek for consolation only in the bitterness of tears and groans. I have not strength to raise my eyes to the place whence comfort flows; I can yet only cast them around me, and I no longer see the dear being who has loaded me with blessings, whose attention from day to day has been occupied in adding fresh proofs of her love to the charms of her society. It is too true, sir, that it requires more than human fortitude to bear so cruel a disunion and so much privation. I was far from being prepared for it: the perfect health I saw her enjoy, and a year's illness, which a hundred times endangered my own life, had taken from me the idea that the order

† Madame de Sévigné, as it appears, died early in April.

of nature could be fulfilled by her dying first. I flattered myself that I should never have this great evil to endure: it is come upon me, and I feel it in all its severity. I deserve your pity, sir; and some share in the honour of your friendship, if sincere esteem and high veneration for your virtue can deserve it. My sentiments have been the same towards you, since I had the pleasure of knowing you; and I believe I have more than once told you, that it is impossible for any one to respect you more than I do.

LETTER * MLXXVII.

FROM M. DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SIMIANE.

Paris, April 25, 1696.

Far from taking it unkindly, madam, that you did not write to me with your own hand, I am very much surprised that you even thought of me at a time so cruel and so fatal as the present. I did not doubt your sensibility at the loss we have sustained; and I could easily conceive what it would cost your excellent heart. God of heaven, what a blow is this to us all! for myself, I am lost in the thought that I shall no longer see the dear cousin, to whom I have been from infancy so affectionately attached, and who returned this attachment so tenderly and so faithfully. If you could see, madam, all that passes here, you would be still better acquainted with the merit of your grandmother, for never was worth more truly acknowledged than hers; and the public renders her, with pious regret, all the honour which is due to her. Madame de Coulanges is grieved to an excess that it is impossible to describe, and I tremble for its effect on her own health. From the day that announced to us the fatal illness, which in

the end took our friend from us for ever, we have lost all peace of mind. The duchess de Chaulnes is almost dead, and poor madame de la Troche—*. In short, we meet together to weep, and to regret what we have lost; and in the midst of our grief, we are not without anxiety for the health of your mother. Do not write to me; order one of your meanest attendants to inform us how you are: I entreat you to believe that your mother's health and your own are very precious to me, for more reasons than one; for I think I owe it to the memory of madame de Sévigné, to be more attached to you and madame de Grignan than before, from knowing so well the sentiments she entertained for her and for you. I shall not write to your mother for a long time, for fear of increasing her grief by my letters; but omit me not, whenever an opportunity offers; make mention of my name; be assured that of all your servants, relations, friends, no one is more deeply afflicted than I am, no one feels a greater interest in all that concerns you. I shall not show your letter immediately to madame de Coulanges; but I shall not fail to tell her that you do not forget her. I can assure you, that you owe her this justice on account of her love for you. Allow me to pay my sad compliments to M. de Simiane, the chevalier de Grignan, and M. de la Garde. Heavens, what a scene in this royal chateau! Poor mademoiselle de Marsillac too, who has so well discharged all the duties of friendship, how I feel for her!

* This phrase is incomplete.

LETTER *MLXXVIII.

FROM MADAME DE COULANGES TO MADAME DE SIMIANE.

Paris, May 2, 1696.

I AM truly obliged to you, madam, for still thinking of me. I knew all your excellences; but the affection of your heart, and the regard you have felt for a person so worthy of being beloved as she whom you regret, appear to me to be above all praise. Ah! madam, how much reason have you to believe me to be deeply affected! I can think of no other subject; I can talk of nothing else. I am ignorant of the particulars of this fatal illness; and the eagerness with which I seek for them, shows that I have little power over myself. I spent the whole of yesterday with the prior of St. Catharine's; you may guess upon what our conversation turned: I showed him the letter you have done me the honour to write to me; it gave him real pleasure; for persons of his turn of mind are so convinced that this life ought only to serve as a passport to the other, that the dispositions in which we leave the world are to them the only ones that are worthy of attention: but we think of what we have lost, and we lament it. For myself, I have no female friend left: my turn will soon come; it is reasonable to expect it: but to hear a person of your age entertain such serious and melancholy thoughts, is rare indeed. Your understanding, madam, makes me forget your youth; and this, added to the natural partiality I feel for you, seems to authorise me to address you as I do.

LETTER *MLXXIX.

FROM THE COUNT DE GRIGNAN TO M. DE COULANGES.

Grignan, May 23, 1696.

You, sir, can understand better than any one, the magnitude of the loss we have sustained, and my just grief. Madame de Sévigné's distinguished merit was perfectly known to you. It is not merely a mother-in-law that I regret; this name does not always command esteem: it is an amiable and excellent friend, and a delightful companion. But it is a circumstance more worthy of our admiration than our regret, that this noble-minded woman contemplated the approach of death, which she expected from the moment of her attack, with astonishing firmness and submission. She, who was so tender and so timid respecting those she loved, displayed the utmost fortitude and piety, when she believed that she ought to think only of herself; and we cannot but remark how useful and important it is, to fill the mind with good things and sacred subjects; for which madame de Sévigné appears to have had a peculiar taste, not to say a surprising avidity, by the use she made of these excellent provisions in the last moments of her life. I relate these particulars to you, sir, because they accord with your sentiments, and will be gratifying to the friendship you have borne for her whom we lament; and at the same time my mind is so full of them, that it is a relief to me to find a man so well disposed as you are to listen to the recital, and take pleasure in hearing it. I hope, sir, that the memory of a friend who highly

esteemed you, will contribute to preserve to me the regard with which you have long honoured me: I prize it too highly, and wish it too much, not to deserve it a little.

THE END.

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